

LONTU PEKIN

BY
EDWARD
STRATEMEYER




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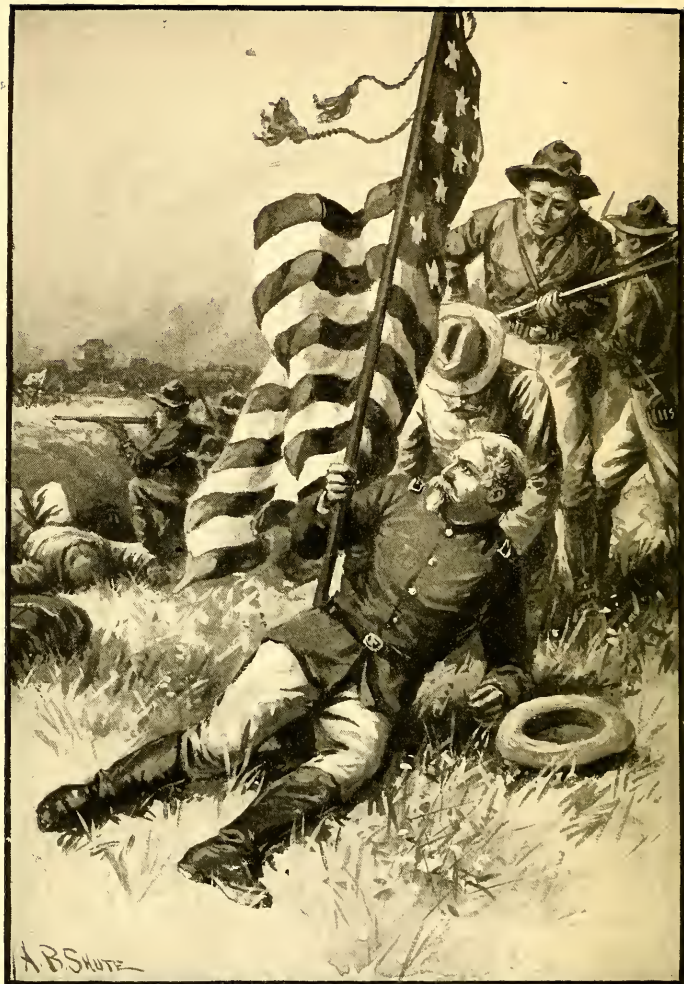
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1
THEN COLONEL LISCUM FELL TO RISE NO MORE.

ON TO PEKIN

OR

OLD GLORY IN CHINA

BY

EDWARD STRATEMEYER

AUTHOR OF "UNDER DEWEY AT MANILA," "A YOUNG VOLUNTEER IN CUBA," "FIGHTING IN CUBAN WATERS," "UNDER OTIS IN THE PHILIPPINES," "THE CAMPAIGN OF THE JUNGLE," "SHIP AND SHORE SERIES," "BOUND TO SUCCEED SERIES," "BETWEEN BOER AND BRITON," ETC.

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ON TO PEKIN.

PREFACE

“ON TO PEKIN ” relates the adventures of a young lieutenant of the regulars, who is sent from Manila to Taku, China, to participate in the campaign of the allied forces of the United States, England, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Russia, and Japan against the Chinese order of the Boxers and those government troops of the Province of Shantung who aided in the great rebellion against all foreigners.

In the story are related, first, the bombardment of the Taku forts and the capturing of Taku and Tongku; next the history of the ill-fated expedition under Vice-Admiral Seymour, R.N., to relieve Peking, and the bombardment and capture of Tien-Tsin; and, lastly, that bold dash of the Internationals for Peking and the relief of the consuls, missionaries, and other foreigners who had been besieged for fifty-six days.

It may be that some of my readers will think Gilbert Pennington an unusually clever officer, and one quite young to be occupying the position of lieutenant

of the regulars. But it must be remembered that Gilbert had served in Cuba with the Rough Riders, and in the Philippines under General MacArthur and General Lawton, and that he took to army service as naturally as a duck takes to water. He was one of those soldiers of whom Grant declared, "They are born, those fellows, not made."

The campaign in China has been as short as it was brilliant; and, with Earl Li Hung Chang and others empowered to treat for peace upon almost any terms, it is to be hoped that a permanent settlement will be made, which will insure both foreigners and China against all further trouble. War, at its best, is a terrible thing; and the less our country has of it, the better it will be for our people.

Once more thanking my young friends for the interest they have shown in my previous stories, I place this volume in their hands, trusting they will find its perusal both pleasurable and full of profit.

EDWARD STRATEMEYER.

NEWARK, N.J.,
OCT. 4, 1900.

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ON TO PEKIN



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCING THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT

“I SAY, Lieutenant Pennington, have you heard the news?”

“That depends upon what the news is, major. Do you mean that we are ordered back to Manila?”

“I mean a good deal more than that, lieutenant. We are ordered to China.”

“China!” And Lieutenant Gilbert Pennington, formerly of the volunteers and now of the regulars stationed on the island of Luzon, leaped up from the camp stool upon which he had been sitting, and gazed at his old friend, Major Morris, as if he had not heard aright. “Who told you such a fairy tale as that?”

"It's the truth, Pennington. I got it direct from the colonel. We are to proceed to Manila without delay, and there take the *Logan* or some other transport direct for China."

"And what are we going to do in China? Has Uncle Sam declared war on the heathen?"

"Hardly that, I imagine. But you know the missionaries and other foreigners are having a lot of trouble with the Boxers, as they are called; and I reckon our government wants some soldiers on hand in case matters get worse."

"Yes, I've heard about the Boxers, although I don't exactly know what they are."

"They call themselves a band of Patriots, but in reality they are a secret society having for its object the extermination of all foreigners in the Celestial Kingdom. They are the worst cut-throats in China, so I have been told."

"Well, this is certainly news," mused Gilbert Pennington. "I had an idea that my fighting days were about over for the present. I never dreamed I should be sent away from the Philippines excepting it would be back to the States."

"I hope the prospect doesn't displease you," went

on Major Morris, earnestly. "For myself I am thoroughly delighted. I am getting tired of hanging around Tarlac. We haven't had a brush with the Filipino guerillas for three weeks, and that last engagement didn't amount to anything."

"Major, you are a fighting man through and through!" laughed the young lieutenant. "I believe you would rather fight than eat."

"Hardly that, Pennington; but I must confess to a weakness for an occasional engagement." The major of the first battalion twisted his mustache meditatively. "Between you and me, privately speaking, I think we have a long, hard campaign before us."

"I can't understand it. If the Chinese government isn't in with the Boxers, why doesn't it suppress the society, and protect our citizens and the citizens of other nations?"

"That's the conundrum, lieutenant. I was talking to the colonel about it; and he says his opinion is that the Chinese government, instead of suppressing the Boxers, is secretly aiding them. The Chinese don't want any foreigners in China, and this outbreak was bound to come sooner or later."

“If they don’t want any foreigners, why did they allow them in the country in the first place?”

“I presume they didn’t imagine the foreigners would pour in so rapidly, or that they would advocate so many changes in business, religion, and other things. You see, the Chinaman sticks to ancient things, and wants to do just as his father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather did.”

“Has there been any fighting there yet?”

“I can’t say as to that. But the other nations are hurrying troops to the scene; and, when we get there, we are to form part of an Allied Army, composed of English, German, French, Japanese, and other nations.”

“Then it will be China against the world.”

“That’s about the size of it. If we fight side by side with the other nations, it will be rather a new experience for our troops.”

“Right you are, major.” The young lieutenant gazed doubtfully at his dirty and ragged khaki uniform and the shoes which had been patched until there was hardly any of the original leather left. “But we ought to have new outfits before we go.”

“No doubt General MacArthur will see that we

get them. He will want Uncle Sam's boys to look as well as the soldiers of any other nation."

"Are any of the volunteers going?"

"Not for the present. But there is no telling how many of the troops will have to go before the trouble in China is over," concluded Major Morris, as he walked on, to spread the news among his other brother officers.

Gilbert Pennington was a young man of Southern blood who had drifted into the army more because of his intense patriotism than for any desire to become a fighter of men. He was from Richmond, Virginia; and, upon the death of his parents and several near relatives, he had wandered around from one place to another, made a trip to the West Indies, and then gone to New York to settle down in business as a book-keeper.

While in New York, the War with Spain broke out; and along with his intimate friend, Ben Russell, Gilbert joined the volunteer service, and served in Cuba as one of Roosevelt's Rough Riders, as related in one of my previous books, entitled "A Young Volunteer in Cuba."

Shortly after his return from Cuba the troubles in

the Philippines broke out; and once again Gilbert enlisted, this time in the infantry, and, accompanied by Ben Russell and his brother Larry, journeyed to Luzon, there to serve under Generals Otis and MacArthur and the much-lamented General Lawton. Many of his adventures of those stirring times will be found set forth in "Under Otis in the Philippines" and later volumes of my "Old Glory Series."

But the rebellion in the Philippines was now practically over, and all the soldiers had to do was to guard against the wandering bands of insurgents who carried on a sort of guerilla warfare whenever the opportunity offered. The season had been a very rainy one, and roads and fields were so covered with water and liquid mud that passage from one district to another was well-nigh impossible. The tiny mountain streams were swollen to rushing torrents, and in many places to bridge them over seemed impossible.

Gilbert had been mustered into the regular service several months before; and, for bravery performed in the capture of the Filipino leader, General Adoz, he had been promoted to the rank of first lieutenant of Company A, of the first battalion. Major Morris had

come into the regulars at the same time, and now commanded the battalion, although really holding the rank of captain. To my young readers let me explain that this meant that, while he commanded as a major, he received as yet only the pay of a captain.

The news that his regiment was going to China filled Gilbert with interest, and for several reasons. In the first place, he was rather tired of the Philippines, and had thought more than once that he had made a mistake by joining the regulars instead of embarking for home, as many of his fellow-soldiers had done. He had campaigned in intense heat until ready to faint with exhaustion, and the heavy rains of the wet season had found the camp literally drowned out more than once. He had been shot, and had lain in the hospital for weeks, so it was small wonder that he occasionally sighed for a bit of ordinary life again. Following the flag is not all glory.

But now something new was promised. He was to visit a strange country, and perhaps fight side by side with soldiers from other parts of the world. More than this, he might have a chance to find Mr. Amos Bartlett.

Years previous to the opening of this story, Mr. Amos Bartlett had been in business with Jefferson Pennington, Gilbert's father. The two had owned several extensive tobacco warehouses in Richmond, and later on had branched out into the tea and coffee trade. The business had grown to such proportions that it was formed into a stock concern called the Richmond Importing Company. At the time the company had been formed, Mr. Pennington had died; and shortly after this Mr. Amos Bartlett had gone to Tien-Tsin, China, to live, taking with him his wife and his little daughter, Jennie.

When it came to a settlement of Jefferson Pennington's affairs, no satisfactory accounting could be obtained from the Richmond Importing Company, and a lawsuit instituted by Gilbert's mother fell through for the lack of evidence. Amos Bartlett had been written to, but was down with the fever in Tien-Tsin, and could give no evidence. The men at the head of the newly formed company were sharpers from New Orleans; and in the end Mrs. Pennington had received only two thousand dollars in cash for her stock, while she was fully satisfied in her own mind that the amount due her husband's

estate had been twenty to thirty thousand dollars. She had no other money than that received from the company, and this was not enough to support her for long; and she died two years later, poor and broken-hearted, leaving Gilbert, then a lad of twelve, to the care of an aged aunt, with whom he lived for four years, when he left home to strike out for himself.

Gilbert had often thought to hunt up Mr. Amos Bartlett, and see if something could not be done toward getting the balance of the money due his father's estate. But China was a long way off; and from some friends he learned that Mr. Bartlett had left Tien-Tsin, and gone into the interior, and that his present whereabouts was unknown. Moreover, the war in Cuba and in the Philippines had driven everything else out of his head, and he had taken matters as they had come.

"But, if I get the chance, I'm going to hunt him up," said the young lieutenant to himself. "And, if I find him, I'll make him tell me all about the doings of the Richmond Importing Company or else know the reason why. I'm bound to have that money, if there is any of it coming to me."

CHAPTER II

CLOSE QUARTERS IN THE JUNGLE

“Boys, we leave to-day for Manila.”

It was Captain Banner of Gilbert's company who spoke, addressing a dozen or more of his command, who were squatting around a camp-fire built near the shelter of an overhanging cliff. Close to the camp-fire were half a dozen rude shacks which the regulars had erected for comfort while stopping in the neighborhood, they preferring the rude huts to their own torn and dilapidated tents.

“Und how soon vos ve goin' py China, captain?” asked Carl Stummer, a German volunteer who had enlisted in Company A soon after his old friend Gilbert had become lieutenant.

“Just as soon as orders come from headquarters, Stummer. Are you anxious to get on new fighting ground?”

“Vell, captain, I ton't vos barticularly anxious for new fightin' ground; but I vos anxious for ground vot ain't vet a foot deep all der dime,” answered

Stummer, with a broad grin. "Last night I dream me I vos in Noah's ark, und der ark got sunk, und I vent overboard. Ven I vake up, I vos on mine pack in vater most a foot teep."

"I hope you swam for your life, Carl," put in Gilbert, while a laugh went up.

"He can't swim, bedad," added Dan Casey, an Irish soldier, who had been a friend to Stummer for years. "Don't ye remimber how Captain Ben Russell—he was only a common sodger thin—hauled him out av the waters av New York Bay, an' was arristed fer doin' it, bekase the colonel thought he was afther tryin' to desert whin he jumped overboard."

"I vos learn me how to schwim since den," replied Stummer, gravely. "Of I didn't learn, I vos drown more as fifty dimes ofer here alretty." And again a laugh went up.

Tents were to be struck at noon, sharp; and soon the camp was a busy place, as the soldier boys began to gather together their few belongings. Although it was raining lightly, guns had to be cleaned, swords polished, and uniforms brushed up as much as possible.

The news had travelled swiftly that the regiment was ordered to China; and many of the officers and men of other commands close by came in to verify the report, and to say good-by to their friends. Several came to see Gilbert and wish him the best of luck, for he had always been popular.

"I thrust we'll be afther seein' Captain Russell in Manila," said Dan Casey to the young lieutenant. "I wouldn't loike to go away widout sayin' him farewell." Casey and Stummer had both been members of Ben Russell's company of volunteers before joining the regulars.

"Yes, I hope we do see him, and Larry, too," answered Gilbert. "I would give a good deal to have the Russells go along." But this was not to be, as the duty of the Russell boys lay elsewhere.

The colonel of the command was a stickler for military discipline; and promptly at twelve the regiment moved, or at least the two battalions which were located in that neighborhood. The third battalion had gone up in the mountains to the southward, and a special message had been sent to it to rejoin the main command at the earliest opportunity.

The light rain soon gave way to a steady down-pour, which threatened to become a deluge before nightfall; and in many spots the soldiers had to leave the road and take to the paddy fields, the thin crust of ground and growth of the one being preferable to the oozy, sticky mud of the other. The caribao carts, piled high with the camping outfit, lumbered along with difficulty; and at every quarter of a mile one or another got stuck, and had to be helped out of its difficulty.

"This is hardly a march to victory, lieutenant," observed Captain Banner, as he ranged alongside of his second in command.

"I don't believe any of us will want a bath for a month after this rain stops," returned Gilbert grimly, "at least, not from the knees up."

"It is well you qualified your first remark," said the captain, who was a West Point graduate, a well-read officer, and a first-rate fellow. "From my knees down I feel as if I had been wandering around in an ocean of filthy pitch. It seems to me the natives ought to be able to make bricks of this sticky mud without half trying."

"We are going to have some fun when we reach

“the river a mile below here,” put in Major Morris, who had also come up. “Captain Anderson came over last night, and he said it was running at a fearful rate then.”

“And what about that new bridge we worked so hard to put up?” asked the young lieutenant.

“It’s completely swept away. The captain thought the storm had done it, but I think the guerillas helped matters along. They hate us worse than they hate poison.”

“I suppose they reckon we have kept them from a good deal of booty,” said Gilbert. “Well, we have, for a fact.”

The storm now became so violent that conversation could be carried on only with difficulty, and presently the party relapsed into silence. The route step had been ordered at the very start; and all of the regulars were marching to suit themselves, although keeping something of a semblance to a column of fours.

At last the river was gained, and a halt was ordered, — an unnecessary command, since none of the troops could go forward. The stream was running two feet deep over its ordinary banks, and swirling along with

the rapidity of a mill-race. It was fully sixty feet wide, and just deep enough in the middle to be dangerous.

As the bridge was gone, it was determined to look for a suitable fording-place, and Gilbert was placed in command of a detachment to ascend the river-bank for that purpose. The course of the soldiers, six in number, lay over a series of rough rocks, and then through a small jungle opening upon an abandoned rice field.

"If the guerillas destroyed that bridge, we want to keep our eyes open," was Gilbert's comment to his men, as they scrambled over the rocks, in Indian file. "They don't travel far in the rain, and they may be close at hand."

"I dink I see me somepoddy chust ahead!" exclaimed Carl Stummer, in a low voice. He was in the lead of the privates, and carried his rifle, ready for use. "Look!" he cried suddenly.

Gilbert gazed in the direction, and made out several forms; but all disappeared before he could get a good view of them.

"Thim was th' Dagoes!" cried Dan Casey, using the common soldier's term for Filipinos. "I wisht I'd

got a bead on 'em! I'd a-laid wan of thim low, I'll bet me nixt wages!"

"To cover!" shouted Gilbert, and pointed to the nearest bit of jungle. The little party ran at once in the direction, but before the shelter of the brush was gained several shots rang out, the bullets clipping the branches of the nearest trees.

The attack came as a surprise; but the young lieutenant was not sorry that the volley had been fired, since it would notify his comrades in arms that something was wrong. Scarcely had the volley ended when Dan Casey fired in return; but, if he hit any one, the enemy gave no sign.

The jungle gained,—it was a small patch less than an acre in extent, facing the river,—Gilbert ordered his men to lie down and keep strict watch on all sides, while he himself moved close to the water's edge. A sudden idea had popped into his head, and he wished to learn if his surmise was correct.

In order to obtain a clear view of the river, he had to wade into the water overrunning the bank to the depth of a foot and more, in the mean time breaking his way through vines and creepers, which formed a perfect network amid the tropical trees. He advanced

as cautiously as he could, and, reaching an opening at last, peeped forth with care.

He had been right in his guess. The Filipino guerillas, some twenty in number, had encamped in another patch of jungle a hundred yards further up the river; and now several of the party were crossing the stream in two *cascoes*, as the native small boats are named. A rope was stretched from shore to shore, and a man in each *casco* was hauling his craft along this by hand.

"If only I had the whole company here!" thought the young lieutenant. He felt that, if this were so, he could readily "bag" every one of the insurgents.

The thought had scarcely crossed his mind when two more rifle-shots rang out, followed by a cry from Stummer.

"Der repels vos running py der rifer!" came from the German soldier. "Shall ve go after dem, lieutenant?"

"No, wait!" ordered Gilbert. He turned to Dan Casey. "Go back as fast as you can, and report a body of twenty guerillas about to cross the river in two boats. We can round them up if we are reinforced immediately."

“I’ll run wid might an’ main,” answered the Irish soldier, and set off with leaps and bounds over the rocks in the direction whence he had come. The Filipinos saw him, and opened fire on him; but he got out of range uninjured.

As soon as Casey was gone, Gilbert called his detachment to his side, and pointed out the *cascoes*.

“Those men must not be allowed to reach the other river-bank,” he said.

“And they won’t reach it, hear me!” cried one of the regulars, a tall Westerner; and, taking aim at the man at the rope in the leading boat, he fired. As the report rang out, the man fell, shot through the shoulder; and the *casco* began to drift rapidly down stream.

The other regulars also opened fire; and soon the ropeman of the second *casco* was likewise laid low, and that boat began to drift after the other. But the craft was still close to shore; and, as soon as their leader was shot down, the other two occupants leaped into the water and mud, and struck out for the jungle which now concealed the rest of the guerillas, who had lost no time in disappearing after the first volley from the Americans.

Left to its own devices, the first boat came down the river rapidly, sometimes swinging to one side and then to the other, and once turning around completely in the strong current. It held two uninjured rebels, who for the time being seemed to be bewildered by the turn of affairs.

As the *casco* approached the spot where Gilbert stood, a sudden turn of the river current forced it to shore. It swept under some overhanging trees; and one of the insurgents immediately grasped some vines, and pulled the craft still further to land.

“Leap for your life, Garro!” shouted one of the pair, in Spanish; and an instant later both sprang out on the river-bank in water up to their knees, and directly in front of the young lieutenant. One held a gun in his hand, and the other a pistol; and in a trice both weapons were levelled at Gilbert’s head.

CHAPTER III

SOMETHING ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF CHINA

GILBERT PENNINGTON had been in many close quarters before, and these had taught him the valuable lesson of being on his guard at all times.

Consequently, when the two rebels faced him, they found him with pistol drawn, and, before either of the enemy could fire, the young lieutenant blazed away. He shot to kill, knowing only too well that his life hung in the balance; and the rebel with the pistol went down, with a bullet in his breast, seriously, if not mortally, wounded. The Filipino's weapon went off as he fell, but the bullet spent itself in the air above the little jungle.

Meanwhile, however, the second rebel was not idle; and, though Gilbert leaped to one side to avoid being made a target of, he received a ball from the gun in his shoulder,—a flesh wound, painful, but of not much consequence.

The shot in the magazine rifle was evidently the

last one; for, having fired it, the Filipino closed in by aiming a blow at Gilbert's head with the stock of his weapon. The blow did not land as intended; but it struck the young lieutenant's arm, and his pistol was knocked skyward just as he was on the point of pulling the trigger a second time.

All of these movements had taken but a few seconds of time to execute; and none of Gilbert's men knew what was occurring until they followed the sounds of the shots, and found the young lieutenant in a hand-to-hand encounter with the rebel over the possession of the Mauser rifle. The rebel was a powerful fellow, much older than Gilbert, and heavier; and he was rapidly getting the better of the encounter, when Carl Stummer came up on the run.

"Drop dot!" roared the German soldier; and, taking aim, he fired on the Filipino, hitting him in the knee. At once the man sank down, moaning with pain; and the gun came into Gilbert's possession.

A moment later a shouting was heard from down the river; and two companies of the regulars came up the bank through the water and mud, and over the

rocks, as speedily as the state of the situation permitted. They soon caught sight of the insurgents, and opened a well-directed fire, at which the enemy took to their heels with all possible speed.

"I owe you one for that, Stummer," said Gilbert, as soon as he saw that the man before him was out of the contest for good. "You came up in the nick of time."

"Dot's all right," answered the private, modestly. "But say! ton't ve besser safe dot poat?"

"To be sure, we'll save the boat," cried Gilbert; and, leaping out into the stream, he secured it, and tied it fast to one of the trees.

The rain was now coming down harder than ever, and this rendered the pursuit of the rebels very difficult; yet it was felt that they must not be allowed to get away, and the whole of the first battalion were sent after them, leaving the second battalion to cross the stream in four *cascoes* which the insurgents had possessed.

Being wounded, Gilbert was not called upon to take part in the pursuit of the fleeing guerillas; for such they properly were, having no regular military organization. He walked around until he found the

surgeon of the regiment, who bound up the wound, after washing and probing it.

"It was a narrow shave for you, lieutenant," said Surgeon Gilson. "A little lower, and you would have been a dead man."

"Well, they say a miss is as good as a mile," responded Gilbert, with a faint smile. "But I am thankful to God that I escaped," he added earnestly.

It was nightfall before the second battalion was landed over the river; and then the other regular companies came in, bringing with them nine prisoners, including two that were wounded. The battalion had had several men wounded, but none seriously.

"I fancy this is our last round-up in Luzon," said Major Morris to Captain Banner and Gilbert. "If all goes well, we ought to reach Manila by to-morrow evening."

The night was spent in the village of Giguenen, where there was a small garrison of American volunteers; and here the prisoners were lodged in the local jail, until the authorities at Manila should decide what was to be done with them.

The storm cleared away during the night; and travelling the next day was, consequently, a little

better, although the roads were still almost impassable. In some spots the carts could not get through with their loads; and the men had to "ferry" the goods across, the turnouts coming over empty.

"I believe the Philippines want good roads more than anything else," observed Gilbert. "In all the time I've been here I've hardly seen a decent highway outside of Manila."

"We are bound for a country where the roads are still worse," returned Captain Banner. "I've been reading up on China lately, and I've learned that there is hardly a respectable highway in the whole Celestial Kingdom. Even the streets of Peking, the great capital, are out of repair, and have been for centuries."

"And yet Chinese labor costs next to nothing. I can't understand it."

"The common people don't want to pay out a single cash for public improvements, that's the reason. Besides that, there comes up the old Chinese saying that 'what was good enough for my father and grandfather is good enough for me.'"

"They must be a terribly backward nation."

"Backward doesn't express it, lieutenant. **They**

are so out of date that they are actually musty. And the worst of it is, because their history dates back so much further than ours,—several thousand years before Christ,—they imagine they know it all and are really a superior people.”

“I am almost ashamed to confess it, but I am very backward on the geography of China,” went on Gilbert. “I know it’s a mighty big country and swarming with millions of people, and that is about all I do know.”

“Yes, it is a big country; for its area is about five millions of square miles, although its original eighteen provinces are only about two millions of square miles in extent,—some geographers say a million and a half. The population of the provinces is reckoned at a hundred and seventy-five million. But this is mere guess-work, for China has never taken a census.”

“With so many people, there ought to be many large cities.”

“No, the large cities are but few in number. The largest, of course, is Peking, the capital, on the Pei-Ho, which contains probably a million and a half to two million inhabitants; and the next is Shanghai, the

great seaport town. Peking cannot be reached by large boats ; and its sea-port, so to speak, is Tien-Tsin, which is also on the Pei-Ho, not many miles from the Gulf of Pechili."

"Then, if there are not many large cities, there must be a host of small ones."

"China, so I have read, is a country of villages ; and there are vast territories where these villages, each containing a hundred or two hundred inhabitants, are less than half a mile apart. You see the Chinese farmer doesn't live on his farm excepting during the time he has to watch his crops, to keep them from being stolen. He lives in the village, along with all of his neighboring farmers ; and all of them go out to work every morning, taking all their tools with them, and even the bucket and windlass for the well, and return at nightfall."

"I think I should rather live on the farm. We always lived on our plantation in Virginia, before we moved to Richmond."

"And so did my folks live on their farm in the Mohawk Valley, New York State, Pennington. But you must remember that, with so many people to feed, farming lands in China are valuable ; and so

they can't afford land for farm-houses or out-buildings or even for fences. Many a farm is not over half an acre in extent, and that has to support a family of six or eight."

"Phew! We had over two hundred acres in Virginia!"

"And we had a hundred and twenty at home; and father said he sometimes felt cramped up, because he didn't own right to the top of the mountain. If it wasn't that John Chinaman can live on next to nothing, he would starve to death."

"But certainly all the people are not so poor."

"There are some rich people in the cities, but the majority merely live from hand to mouth. The richest man of all is Earl Li Hung Chang, one of the viceroys, who visited the United States some years ago. He is a millionaire many times over, and a very powerful political leader in the bargain. They say he is the only viceroy who enjoys the confidence of the dowager empress and the young emperor."

"It's a wonder he doesn't make a move to enlighten his people, and get them to take up Western ideas."

“There is too much of religion and superstition in the way. The Chinamen all believe in geomancy, as it is called. According to that, no street in a village must be straight for fear the Evil Spirit may sweep through too easily, and no door in a house can be directly opposite to another for the same reason. The cities and towns are all laid out according to the rules of geomancy, as expounded by the so-styled learned men who make the mysterious art a life study. Even the grave of a rich man is not located until the geomancer has been well paid in order to locate a spot where wind and weather cannot disturb the spirit of the departed one.”

“Such superstition is almost beyond belief.”

“That is only the beginning of it. They believe in all sorts of signs and omens, and won’t even cook a meal at a fireplace unless the latter is located near a door or window, so that the evil spirits in the food can find an easy way out of doors.”

“Humph! I wonder what they would say to some of our up-to-date inventions,—the telephone, for instance?”

“I don’t know about the telephone; but they do say that in the interior the people believe the tele-

graph wires are bewitched, and they won't walk under them excepting with their eyes closed and while holding their breath, or else while repeating some verse from Confucius. For many years they wouldn't allow a railroad to go through, because such a road would disturb the graves that are scattered here, there, and everywhere instead of being in regular cemeteries, as in our own country."

"I reckon the people in the interior are even more ignorant than those on the seacoast."

"They are, if the books I have read are to be believed. One writer says that some Chinamen were surprised to learn that he, as a 'foreign devil,' did not have three legs and a horn, and that others thought he had a hole through his breast through which a pole could be thrust whenever he wanted to be carried from place to place. Another writer says he was also asked about the hole, and that the natives were surprised to learn that he could bend his knees, having heard that no 'foreign devils' could bend their knees to their gods. This writer had a camera with him, and came close to having his head cut off through trying to take some snap-shots in the village. He added that numerous Chinamen think that photo-

graphs must be made out of babies' eyes ; and, as very few of the poor natives of the interior have any use for a girl baby, they sometimes offer to sell such a baby to be sacrificed, so that the eyes can be made up into photographs ! ”

CHAPTER IV

CAPTAIN PONSBERRY HAS HIS SAY

“ Hurrah! Here come the boys who are bound for China !”

“ Good luck to you, boys! Wish I was going with you !”

“ Don’t let the Chinks get the best of you! Stick up for Uncle Sam and Old Glory every time !”

Such were some of the cries as the command to which Gilbert was attached swung across the bridge which spanned the river Pasig, and marched through the streets of old Manila to the barracks assigned to them previous to their departure for China.

It was a warm, pleasant evening, and the thoroughfares were alive with people,— Americans, natives, Spaniards, Englishmen, and likewise a good sprinkling of Chinamen. But the latter had already heard of the sending of troops to their native land, and they took good care to keep in the background for fear of a riot in which they might come off second-best. All

was gayety, with scarcely a thought of the terrible struggles which had occurred in that vicinity but a few months before.

The barracks were gained, and, while the band was playing one of the popular airs of the day, the companies were dismissed to seek their quarters and make themselves as comfortable as circumstances permitted.

“Gilbert! I was hoping I should find you!”

The exclamation came from a tall, handsome young fellow wearing the uniform of a captain of volunteers; and, as the young lieutenant turned, he found his hand tightly clasped by his old chum, Ben Russell.

“Ben!” cried Gilbert. “I am ever so glad to meet you. I was afraid I should have to leave Luzon without seeing you. How have you been?”

“First-rate, Gilbert. And you?”

“Oh, I’m all right except for a slight wound in the shoulder. We had a final brush with the guerillas yesterday, and bagged nine of them. But what are you doing here?”

“I came down on a special mission for the general. Larry is with me, as a member of my company. Here he comes now.”

As Larry Russell came up, more hand-shaking followed; and then the Russells plied Gilbert with questions, all of which he answered as well as he could.

"I wish you were going with us," said the young lieutenant. "We might have some fine times together."

"That's true," put in Larry Russell. "But I guess we've got to stay here until we are mustered out."

"Perhaps we'll be sent to China later on," said Ben Russell. Then he turned, as he felt a pluck at his sleeve. "Hullo, Stummer! And you, too, Casey! How are you getting along? It's too bad that you left me to join the regulars, but I suppose it's all for the best."

"I dink you besser choin, too," replied the German soldier. "Uncle Sam vill need you in China, sure."

"Perhaps, Carl, but not now."

"To lave you is the wan sorrow of me partin' wid Manila," said Casey. "Sure, an' we was loike brothers, barrin' ye was captain an' I was a corporal. I hope we mate ag'in, so I do." And his honest eyes looked suspiciously moist. He had served with Ben all through the Cuban and Philippine campaigns.

The conversation now became general; and pres-

ently Casey and Stummer went off, leaving Gilbert and the Russells to themselves. From one thing the talk drifted to another, and finally came around to Mr. Amos Bartlett and the fortune Jefferson Pennington had sunk in the Richmond Importing Company.

"The Richmond Importing Company!" cried Larry. "Why, I know a party who is now working for that concern."

"You do!" exclaimed Gilbert. "And who is it?"

"Captain Ponsberry, of the three-masted schooner *Columbia*, the vessel I shipped in from Honolulu, with Luke Striker."

"You mean the ship you were serving on at the time you went overboard and was picked up by Admiral Dewey's flagship just before the battle of Manila?"

"The same. Captain Ponsberry wasn't carrying for the Richmond Importing Company then, but he is now. He told me so himself yesterday."

"Yesterday? Then his ship must be here."

"She is."

"I should like to see this Captain Ponsberry, to find out how the company stands at present."

“Then you had better get around to-night or early to-morrow. He sails at noon.”

“I’ll go at once if you’ll show the way,” concluded Gilbert.

Larry was willing; and soon the three were on their way to new Manila, as it is designated, across the Pasig, and down to where the numerous wharves were lined with huge warehouses containing all sorts of merchandise from nearly every quarter of the globe.

The *Columbia* lay deep in the water opposite the wharf from which she had loaded, for she was laden with a cargo for China. At the wharf they found a small boat tied up, in charge of a sailor named Hobson, whom Larry Russell knew very well.

“Hullo, Larry, what brings you?” demanded Hobson, in surprise; for he had not expected to see the young soldier-sailor.

“My friend wishes to see Captain Ponsberry, Hobson. Is he ashore?”

“No, I’m waiting for Tom Grandon, the mate. The cap’n is on board.”

“Will you take us over?”

“Certainly. Jump in.”

The two entered the row-boat, and Gilbert was in-

introduced to Hobson, who had been Larry's messmate for several months. Soon the side of the schooner was gained, and Larry clambered to the deck with the agility of a monkey, leaving Gilbert to follow.

"Hullo, Larry! back again?" came from Captain Nat Ponsberry, a whole-souled skipper of the old New England school. "I had hardly expected to see you again afore I sailed."

"My friend here wishes to have a talk with you, captain," answered Larry. "He is Lieutenant Gilbert Pennington now of the regulars, but formerly of the volunteers. He served with my brother Ben."

"Oh, yes! reckon as how I've heard tell of ye," said Captain Ponsberry, as he extended a horny hand, as hard as it was honest. "Glad to know ye personally."

"Perhaps you'll think it strange I should come to you for information, captain," said the young lieutenant. "But Larry tells me you are carrying for the Richmond Importing Company now."

"Exactly." And the skipper of the *Columbia* gazed questioningly at the speaker. "But this is my first trip; and I don't know but that it may be my last, too."

“And may I ask why you say it may be your last?”

“You may, since I’ve nothing to conceal on the p’int, lieutenant. Their price ain’t my price, thet’s all. I can make more money on my own hook.”

“The reason I have come to you is this: Years ago my father owned stock in the company. He died, and when my mother tried to get a settlement — well, they didn’t give her near as much as she expected.”

“I see.” Captain Ponsberry paused. “Well?”

“That was when I was only ten years old,— rather a long time ago. I’ve never had a chance to look into the claim, but I intend to do so now; and I want to know how the company stands, if you don’t mind telling me.”

“As I said afore, I have nothing to conceal. So far as I know, the standin’ of the concern is good, and it is wuth nigh on to two hundred thousand dollars.”

“And who is its head?”

“Mr. Ramsey Polk, a banker, who does business in Richmond and in New Orleans.”

“He must be the same Polk who took hold at the time my father died. I remember the name well.”

“More’n likely, lieutenant; an’, if he is, I’ll allow you have a tough customer to deal with,” added the skipper of the *Columbia*, with a peculiar smile.

“Then you found him hard to deal with?”

“I did.”

“Do you know if there is a Mr. Amos Bartlett still connected with the company?”

“Yes, there is; but I’ve got it putty straight that the Polks, father an’ son,—an’ the son, Nuggy, is wuss nor his dad,—are doin’ their best to squeeze him out of it.”

“And where is Mr. Bartlett, now?”

“In Tien-Tsin, China, or else at Shanghai.”

“And how are they going to squeeze him out?”

“If you’ll tell me, I’ll tell you,” laughed Captain Ponsberry. “I guess the Polks have a way all their own. But they’ll do it, for I’ve heard that they have squeezed out others. Nuggy Polk is on his way now to China, to see what he can do toward ousting Bartlett out of the concern. The Polks know they have a good thing, an’ I guess they want to keep it right in the family.”

“You say he is on his way to China. Is he here?”

“He was here a few days ago. I think he sailed for Hong Kong yesterday.”

“I wish I had seen him. Perhaps he could have given me some information.”

“Not he—if he thought you were after some money due your father,” returned Captain Ponsberry, with a sharp shake of his head. “The Polks are close-fisted to the last degree. You won’t get a cent from them unless you wring it by main force.”

“Then I’ll wring it by main force—if I find that some money is really due me,” answered Gilbert, with determination.

Captain Ponsberry now invited the pair to his cabin; and the three went below, and discussed the situation for the best part of an hour. During this talk, Gilbert learned that the affairs of the Importing Company were almost entirely in the hands of the Polks, who had forced out a man named Redmund and an old widow named Van Vechen, both of Richmond. Amos Bartlett was now the only outsider holding stock, and it was the captain’s opinion that Nuggy Polk’s sole reason for going to China was to get the old merchant to sell out his holding.

“An’, if he won’t sell out, he’ll be squeezed out,”

added the captain. "But I guess the Polks will get him to sell out by showin' him papers an' statements to prove that the company ain't making any money an' is in debt."

"But you say they are doing well?"

"So they are, too. I had a search made afore I agreed to carry for 'em."

"Then a statement to the contrary would be a fraud," put in Larry.

"Exactly. But what could Bartlett prove if the hull thing was done in secret?"

"It won't be done in secret—not if I can help it," said Gilbert; and there the conversation came to an end.

CHAPTER V

GILBERT MEETS NUGGY POLK

THE two transports which were to take the soldiers from Manila to China lay in the harbor off the Anda Monument; but several days were still to elapse before the first of them should set sail on her momentous voyage to Nagasaki, Japan, the first stopping-place. Where the transport was to go after that, none of the under officers or privates knew. The duty of the American soldier is to obey orders, and not ask questions.

There was much to do,—new uniforms and shoes to be fitted, guns to be inspected, ammunition to be dealt out, camping outfits to be cared for,—so that the hours flew by swiftly for Gilbert and all the others; and he had no time in which to ascertain whether or not Nuggy Polk—whose real first name was Nuglich—was still in Manila or if he had set sail for the Celestial Empire.

The transport was to sail on Tuesday; and by

Monday night the preparations for departure — so far as they affected the young lieutenant — were complete. This being so, he asked for leave of absence for several hours, which was readily granted; and off he went to hunt up Nuggy Polk.

Captain Ponsberry had described the young man as tall and thin, with a short, stubby mustache and eyes which shifted continually. He was said to have stopped at the Hotel for American Gentlemen, as one of the native resorts had lately been pompously rechristened.

Gilbert found the hostelry without much difficulty, and on inquiry at the desk learned that Nuggy Polk had left the place that morning.

“He was not sure if he would be back,” said the clerk. “He wanted to visit the soldiers’ encampment up at the water-works. Perhaps you will find him there.”

The water-works are several miles to the eastward of Manila, at a spot where a few months before some severe fighting had taken place between the Americans and the insurgents. Gilbert decided to journey thither, and hired a pony for that purpose.

The young lieutenant had been over this ground

before,—indeed, some of his first fighting in the Philippines had been done in that neighborhood; and he found his way, without difficulty, along a highway lined with palms and other tropical trees.

As he moved along, he kept his eyes open for anybody who might bear a resemblance to the young man he desired to interview. It was growing dark rapidly; yet the night promised to be clear, and he could still see without much difficulty.

The camping grounds of the soldiers at the water-works were almost gained, when, on reaching a turn of the road, the young lieutenant beheld coming toward him a high native fancy cart, drawn by two stout ponies. On the seat of the cart sat two young men; and, from the description which had been given to him, he recognized the driver of the turnout as Nuggy Polk.

As soon as he made his discovery that the man he was seeking was before him, Gilbert also learned something else, which was that both young men had been drinking far more than was good for them, and, if they were not intoxicated, they were pretty close to it. The driver was swaying from side to side, ~~joking~~ ^{joking} the reins in a way to completely bewilder his

steeds; and his companion was expostulating, and trying to get the lines in his own possession.

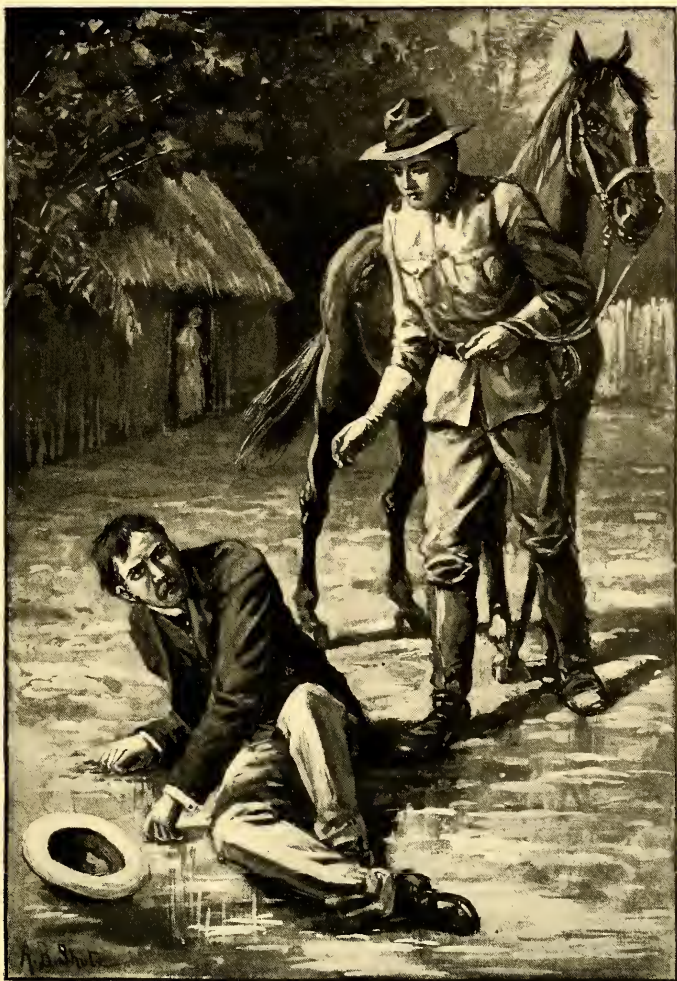
"I tell you, Nuggy, you ain't in no condition to drive," the second young man was saying. "Give me the lines, an' I'll show you how to make 'em trot."

"Give you nothing!" retorted Nuggy Polk, savagely. "I can drive as well as anybody, Jerry Nickerson; and I want you to know it."

"You're steerin' 'em into the rocks," went on Jerry Nickerson. "You'll smash us up in another minit!" And he clutched Polk's arm to keep himself from rolling off the high seat to the ground.

"Lemme go!" screamed the would-be driver, and tried to shake his companion off; but Jerry Nickerson made another clutch for the reins, and a fierce struggle ensued, in the midst of which the ponies took fright, and began to tear down the highway at their best speed.

Gilbert could do nothing to stop the runaway team; and, as the high cart bounced past, he fully expected to see the two young men thrown out and killed. The reins fell upon the ponies' heels, and then Jerry Nickerson clutched the seat for safety. Nuggy Polk was thrown over backward, into the



"YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT IF YOU'LL ONLY STAND UP."—Page 45.

rear of the cart, and came to the ground with a splash just as the turnout went through a mud puddle six inches deep.

“Help! save me!” roared the young man, bellowing like a bull. “Don’t let the hosses kick me to death!”

He continued to bellow and splash around in the mud until Gilbert, dismounting, went to his assistance. “You’ll be all right if you’ll only stand up,” said the young lieutenant.

“All right? Do I want to be kicked to death?” demanded Nuggy Polk, as he sat up, and dug the mud from his eyes.

“You’ll not be kicked to death. You landed in a soft spot, so I reckon there are no bones broken.”

“But the hosses — ”

“Your ponies and cart are half a mile from here by this time. They went off like a streak of lightning.”

“Humph!” Nuggy Polk arose to his feet with difficulty, and dragged himself to where Gilbert stood. “Where’s Jerry?” he demanded.

“Your companion was clinging to the cart seat the last I saw of him.”

“Humph! He’ll be killed as sure as you’re born. But it serves him right. He had no business to try to take the reins out of my hands. I know how to drive—used to drive the finest high-steppers in Richmond. He don’t know the first thing about hosses.”

“Well, I hope he isn’t killed.”

“Oh, he’ll be all right—you couldn’t kill Jerry Nickerson if you tried. Say, but I’m in a pickle, ain’t I?” And Nuggy Polk surveyed himself dismally. He was arrayed in a white linen suit, with a fancy silk dress shirt; and the outfit had suffered much from the contact with mud and water. “I can’t go back to Manila looking like this.”

Gilbert could offer nothing but his handkerchief; and this Polk accepted, and washed his face and hands at a near-by pool. He was very unsteady on his legs, and his speech was thick. He declared that he did not care what became of Jerry Nickerson.

“He’s my friend, but in a case of this kind he must take care of himself,” he muttered. “I suppose those ponies won’t run on forever.”

“If you got them from a stable in Manila, they will probably go straight home,” answered Gilbert.

"By the way, do you belong in Manila?" he went on, determined to "pump" Polk without making himself known.

"Me belong to Manila?" cried the young man. "Not much. You couldn't hire me to live in such a back-number town. No, I'm from Richmond, Virginia."

"Then you are a good way from home. But I, too, come from Virginia," continued Gilbert. "I was born in Powhatan Court House," which was the exact truth.

"Is that so? Glad to know you. You're a lieutenant, I reckon, by the uniform."

"I am, Mr.—"

"Nuglich Polk is my handle. Generally called Nuggy by my friends. And you are?—"

"My name is Gilbert."

"Proud to know you!" The young man tried to look sober for a second, then burst out into a fit of unreasonable laughter. "Say, but I cut a figure, didn't I, when I went into the mud?"

"I didn't see very clearly. I was watching your team."

"Oh, don't smooth it over, lieutenant. It's all

right! So we are both from Virginia? Good enough! Ever been to Richmond?"

"Yes, years ago."

"I and my father run the Richmond Importing Company there. Perhaps you've heard of the concern. We ship goods all over the world,—China, Japan, South Africa, everywhere. Got a vessel here now, bound for China, the *Columbia*. Had to look after her, and that's what brought me to the Philippines."

"Then you are going back to the States soon?" went on Gilbert. "You're lucky. Lots of the boys would like to go, too."

"No, I'm booked straight through to China." Nuggy Polk gave something closely resembling a hiccough, and then felt in a rear pocket of his trousers. "Have a drink?" he went on, producing a whiskey flask.

"Thanks, but I'm not a drinking man," answered Gilbert.

"What! Don't drink? Well, I never! I'll drink for you. Here's your health."

The whiskey flask was elevated to Polk's lips, and a long low gurgle followed. The action disgusted

the young lieutenant; but he felt powerless to remonstrate, even had he felt so inclined.

"Ah! now I feel better!" said the young man, more unsteadily than ever; and then, finding the flask empty, he threw it to one side of the road. "Yes, I'm from Richmond; and I don't care who knows it. We are the people! Ain't that so?" And he tried to brace up proudly.

"We are certainly some of the people," answered Gilbert; and he felt like adding that Polk was the most disgusting specimen he had yet encountered. "If you and your father run the Richmond Importing Company, you must be doing a large business."

"Large doesn't express it, lieutenant. It's growing every day."

"A stock concern, I reckon?"

"Humph! It's our concern,—belongs to father and me. We used to have some outside people in it, but we froze 'em out,—had to do it, it was such a good thing, don't you see?"

"That was rather hard on the other fellows, I should imagine."

"Oh, we paid 'em to get out; but not too much, understand? We're shrewd, me and father, when it

comes to real business." Nuggy Polk gave a lurch which landed him on the grass of the roadside. "Say, but that tumble made me weak in the legs!" he declared.

"Better rest here, and see if your friend comes back," suggested Gilbert. "I'll stay with you; and, if he doesn't return, I'll see to it that you get back to Manila in safety."

"Will you? That's mighty kind, lieutenant, and I'll stay; and I'll pay you for all you do for me." And the young man pulled from his pocket a roll of bank bills. "I reckon bills go with you, even if the confounded natives won't accept 'em."

"I don't want your money —"

"Don't grow offended, lieutenant. I'm all right, and you're all right. We understand each other, don't we?"

"I hope we shall, if not now, then later on," replied Gilbert, with an emphasis which was entirely lost on the befuddled young man to whom the words were addressed.

CHAPTER VI

OFF FOR CHINA

THE young lieutenant felt utterly disgusted over the speech and actions of the young man before him; yet he did not feel inclined just yet to part company with Nuggy Polk. There is an old saying that, "when the wine is in, the wit is out"; and Gilbert felt certain that by judicious "pumping" he could learn a good deal concerning the Richmond Importing Company and the Polks' peculiar method of transacting business.

Gilbert could readily see that Nuggy Polk was a "high-flyer," or, in other words, a fast young man, and one who was inclined to spend his father's money much faster than the parent had made it. Yet the young man did not look like a hard drinker; and his present condition, Gilbert concluded, was an unusual one.

"May I ask if you have been in Richmond lately?" said Gilbert, after a pause, during which

Nuggy Polk had closed his eyes, as if on the point of going to sleep.

"Came from Richmond to 'Frisco, an' from 'Frisco here," was the unsteady answer. "'Bout four months ago — came on mail steamer. Going to China — do the country in 'bout six weeks, and then go home again. This don't suit at all. Richmond is good enough for me."

"I suppose you'll have a good deal of work to do in China for your company."

"A little, lieutenant. You see, I don't believe in killing myself with labor." Nuggy Polk tried to laugh, but the effort only ended in a hiccough. "Main object is to find a man named Bartlett, a fellow who owns a little block of stock in our concern."

"Going to buy him out?"

"You've struck the head on the nail — I mean — er — the nail on the nai — no, the nail on the — the head — yes, the head. Don't want Bartlett in the company any more. He'll make too much money if he stays in." And Nuggy Polk gave a chuckle.

"Supposing this Bartlett won't sell out?"

"He's got to, or we'll — er — we'll squeeze him, same as we did the others."

"Bound to hold on to a good thing, I see," commented Gilbert, speaking as carelessly as possible. "I suppose you and your father organized the company in the first place."

"Not exactly, although it was father's idea. There was a fellow named Jefferson Pennington used to do quite a business in tobacco and cotton, and some tea and coffee; and the company started out of his trade."

"Oh! then this Pennington is at the top of the concern."

"No, not a bit of it! He's dead years ago."

"And I suppose you scooped his share, too. You must be a smart set."

"Thanks for the compliment, lieutenant. Reckon we are smart; but then, you see, it runs in the blood. Both of my grandfathers were bankers and brokers, and knew how to turn things to the best advantage."

"It's a wonder Pennington and these others didn't kick at being squeezed."

"They did kick; but it didn't do 'em no good, not a bit. We had the whip hand, an' we kept it. Pennington's widow raised a big row, so father has told me; but it ended in smoke."

"You held the evidence and kept it."

"You hit the nail on the head ag'in, Lieutenant. We are smart, and we are the people." Nuggy Polk gave a long, drunken yawn. "This looks as if Jerry wasn't coming back. Say, I've an idea."

"Well?"

"Can't you carry me back to Manila on your hoss?"

"I don't believe the pony will carry the weight."

"Lemme try him."

Only with the greatest of difficulty did Nuggy Polk manage to rise to his feet. Then he lurched up against Gilbert, took a plunge, and hit the pony in the ribs. The animal turned, bumped roughly against the young man, and Polk measured his length on the ground.

"Whoa, you rascal!" spluttered the fallen one. "Lieutenant, he's worse than the team. I can't ride him nohow."

At this juncture a rumble of cart wheels was heard, and soon a native turnout hove in sight, drawn by a pair of caribaos. A sleepy Tagal sat on the seat.

Stopping the cart, Gilbert inquired if the Tagal was bound for Manila.

"*Si, señor,*" answered the man, in Spanish.

"Take me along then," put in Nuggy Polk. "I'll pay you well." And he jingled some coin in his pocket.

The native assented, and, leaping to the ground, he assisted the young man to a seat in the rear of the cart. Here there was some straw, upon which rested several bunches of plantains; and on this straw Nuggy Polk stretched himself, and in a moment more was sound asleep.

"You can take him to the Hotel for American Gentlemen," said Gilbert. "Do you know the place?"

"Yees, mistair. He has drank much, not so?"

"Yes. They know him at the hotel, though; and I reckon it will be all right. I'll ride behind."

No more was said, and soon the cart was on its way to the capital. Hardly a mile was covered when they came upon Jerry Nickerson, sitting on the wreck of the fancy cart, the picture of misery and despair. Broken bits of harness lay on the ground, and the ponies were nowhere in sight. Nickerson had had his left hand cut, and had the member bound up in his handkerchief.

"They tried to take a stone wall, hang 'em!" he explained to Gilbert. "The cart's a wreck, and so'm I. Where's Nuggy?"

"Safe," answered the young lieutenant. "If you don't want to stay here all night, you had better hop up behind."

"But the busted cart—?"

"You had better attend to the cart and the ponies in the morning."

Nickerson wished, in drunken style, to argue the matter; but the young lieutenant was in no humor to listen to such a beast, and ordered the Tagal to drive on. Seeing this, Nickerson scrambled up behind, threw himself beside Nuggy Polk, and was soon snoring lustily.

The Hotel for American Gentlemen was reached without further incident; and, having had the Tagal drive into the court-yard, Gilbert interviewed the clerk, and had the two sleeping ones transferred to the rooms they had previously occupied.

"Can you tell me who this Jerry Nickerson is?" asked the young lieutenant of the clerk at the desk.

"I cannot, excepting that he seems to be a close friend to Mr. Polk," was the reply.

"How long have the pair been at the hotel?"

"About ten days."

"And what vessel are they going to take for China?"

"The *Orient*. But she sails at nine o'clock tomorrow morning, and I doubt if they awake in time to go on board," concluded the clerk. As far as he was concerned, he did not wish the two guests to catch the steamship. They had paid well for their accommodations, and he felt inclined to have them remain with him as long as possible.

Having seen to it that the Tagal owning the cart had been paid for bringing the two young men to Manila, Gilbert took his pony back to the livery stable, and then made his way to the barracks. He had not learned a great deal concerning the Richmond Importing Company, yet he had gathered sufficient information to set him to thinking deeply.

"Those Polks are rascals beyond a doubt," he said to himself. "But there is a big difference between knowing a thing and being able to prove it. I hope, when I get to China, that I shall have a chance to hunt up Mr. Bartlett and to watch what Nuggy Polk does."

It was late when the young lieutenant turned in; and, as the pony ride had made him tired, he slept soundly, and did not awaken until the roll of the drum aroused him. Dressing hastily, he stepped out to the parade ground in front of the barracks.

The scene was an animated one, for a crowd had gathered to see the regulars off. As soon as the companies could be formed, they were marched to the wharf at the Anda Monument; and here numerous *cascoes* began to take men and equipments off to the *Logan* and the other transport which were to carry the soldiers on their journey up the China and Yellow Seas.

“Off at last, eh!” cried a voice in Gilbert’s ear; and, turning, he saw Ben Russell at his elbow. Ben had but a few minutes to spare, and a short but lively conversation ensued. Then the old chums shook hands; and Gilbert stepped into the *casco* which was to take him to the transport. The friends were destined not to see each other again for a long, long time.

A band was playing on the Lunetta, the great pleasure ground of Manila, as Gilbert went on board the transport. Many had preceded him, and

soon the boat was comfortably filled, although not crowded.

Besides the soldiers, there were a regimental band, a hospital corps, a number of officers' families, and half a dozen newspaper correspondents. There were also others on board whose presence were to surprise the young lieutenant greatly.

"Well, lieutenant, how do you feel?" asked Major Morris, as he met Gilbert in one of the gangways.

"First-rate, major, but rather sorry to leave the Philippines, after all."

"Precisely my case. We had many a lively campaign there, didn't we?"

So the talk ran on until night shut out a view of the city, leaving only the electric and other lights to twinkle in the darkness. There was but little sleep on board. At sunrise all were astir, and a little while later the steamship turned her head for the entrance to Manila Bay. Two hours sufficed to pass Corregidor Island; and then it could be said that the voyage to China was fairly begun.

CHAPTER VII

WHAT CAUSED THE WAR

IN this tale of a young soldier's experiences during the American army's first campaign in China, it is not my intention to go into the details of all that led up to the terrible outbreak in the Celestial Empire,—an outbreak which will probably be known as the Boxers' Uprising of 1900. Yet it will be well for us to glance over some of the events which had occurred immediately before the sailing of the troops from Manila, in order to understand the situation as Gilbert and his fellow-soldiers found it, on their arrival at Taku.

The real trouble dated back to years before, when China and Japan went to war, the result of which was that China lost her ancient dependency of Korea; and a general "mix up" resulted in Japan taking the island of Formosa, and Russia taking Manchuria, Port Arthur, and other strategic points. This was followed by England's occupation of Wei-

Hai-Wei, and Germany's seizure of Kaio-Chau. And then these powers and others went even further, by establishing what were known as Spheres of Influence throughout the Celestial Kingdom.

In the past China had lost ground only in her outlying districts or territories. Now one of her original eighteen provinces was opened to the foreigners; and probably the Chinese felt as Americans might have felt had somebody tampered with the rights of the citizens living in one of our thirteen original States. Railroads were built against the Chinese will; and, because of resistance to the workers on the roads, two whole Chinese villages were razed, and the inhabitants driven forth, homeless.

The anti-foreign feeling had been strong; and now, as the Chinese saw the Europeans gradually closing down upon them, with here and there a number of Americans as well, the feeling against the "foreign devils"—as all people of white skin are called—grew hotter and hotter.

The missionaries were the first to feel the pressure brought to bear by the Boxers, who, in secret conclave, determined that all foreigners must either be driven from the country or slain. Notices were

posted on the churches and houses, ordering the missionaries to depart within a week or a moon or three moons, under penalty of death; and all merchants, traders, and travellers were also warned to leave.

A few paid heed to these warnings; but the majority decided that they had a right to stay, and remained. They had been guaranteed protection by the Chinese government, under treaties made with their home governments; and the missionaries were also promised protection by the Chinamen they had converted. But, when the storm broke, the converted Chinamen suffered as much as did those who had converted them.

What led to the first fight of 1900 it would be hard to say; but the troubles began early in the year, when Dr. Brooks, who had sheltered the German engineer for whom the Chinese were searching in his house, was murdered on January 2. This act was quickly followed by the slaying of a number of other missionaries and of foreigners generally, until by May the whole civilized world woke up to the fact that no white people in China would be safe unless they were defended by their own countrymen. The Chinese government could not suppress the Boxer

movement, even if it felt so inclined, which was doubtful.

The greatest uprising was in the provinces of Pechili and Shantung, situated in the extreme east of the empire, on the Yellow Sea and the Gulf of Pechili. Here the Pei-Ho (Ho means river) empties into the gulf, with the forts of Taku on one side and the village of Tongku on the other. Back of the Taku forts is Taku village, and twenty-seven miles up the stream lies the important city of Tien-Tsin. From Tien-Tsin to Peking is about eighty miles, but navigation on the river does not extend the entire distance.

Finding that they could not hold their own in the villages in which they were located, missionaries and other foreigners in and around Peking and Tien-Tsin gradually congregated in the cities named, under the protection of their home consuls, until the various American, English, German, French, Italian, and other foreign legations became crowded with people all clamoring for aid, with Boxers on the outside howling that they be driven out or slain. By June 1 matters had reached an acute stage; and the outside powers felt that something must be done,

or China would witness one of the most barbarous slaughters in the annals of history. No war was declared on China; but the government was given to understand that each outside nation intended to rescue its own people, no matter at what cost.

The first movement of the foreign nations, or the Allies, as they were termed, was from Tien-Tsin. All the nations had sent warships up to the Gulf of Pechili, and from these were landed a force of twenty-five hundred marines and soldiers, under the general command of Admiral Seymour of the British Navy, he being the highest in rank of any of the officers present. With this force were one hundred marines from the United States cruiser *Newark*, under the command of Captain McCalla.

News had come that the legations at Peking were in a state of siege, and that all the foreign ministers were either murdered or about to be slain, and that hundreds of foreigners were already dead; and the object of the expedition was to relieve those at the capital. But the force was altogether too small for the purpose in view. It was stopped long before Peking was in sight, and escaped total annihilation only by what seemed almost a miracle.

On June 15 it was decided by several of the European powers that it would be necessary to take possession of the railroad station at Tongku, so that communications could be opened with the advancing army by rail. In the meantime a strong force of Boxers and Chinese troops had taken possession of the Taku forts. As this was a menace to the warships in the harbor, orders were served that the Chinese must vacate the forts, or they would be bombarded. The Chinese paid no attention to the orders.

The American warships had no authority to attack at that time, so the bombardment of the forts was conducted by the European gunboats, the cruisers finding the water too shallow for them. Three Russian, one British, one French, and one German craft took part in the engagement. One of the Russian boats was badly disabled, and the Allies lost twenty men killed and had over sixty wounded. The Chinese loss was over four hundred, and after seven hours' fighting the forts were stormed by the sailors and the Celestials fled. During the engagement the American vessel *Monocacy* was struck, but the shot did little damage.

The taking of the Taku forts aroused the Chinese as never before; and a retreat was ordered to the Chinese quarter of Tien-Tsin, and from this territory began an active bombardment of the foreign quarter of the city. The fighting was now on in earnest, and where it would end no man or nation could tell.

From Nagasaki the transport was to proceed to Taku, but further than that no one on board knew; for the future movements of the troops would depend entirely upon circumstances.

"We are out for some hot fighting, I am certain of that," said Major Morris to Gilbert, as the pair sat on the deck late on the afternoon of the second day out from Manila. It was cloudy, and there was a breeze blowing, which made it quite comfortable, considering they were in the tropics.

"I believe you, major; and I've been wondering if it wouldn't be a good plan to put the boys through some drilling. They have been going it rather as they pleased up at Tarlac."

"The colonel says he will begin drilling to-morrow. He wishes the boys to get their sea legs first."

"I've been wondering how the Chinese are armed."

Are they as backward in that as in some other things?"

"Hardly. You see the war with Japan opened their eyes; and since that time they have been drilling their soldiers under the directions of European officers, and supplying them with the best rifles in the market. I understand, too, that their forts are supplied with Krupp guns."

"Then we won't have a walk-over."

"By no means, and for two reasons. First they are well armed, and in the second place there are so many of them that they may overpower the Allies by mere force of numbers. Nothing is known of Admiral Seymour's relief party, and I shouldn't be surprised if he and brave Captain McCalla's men had been annihilated."

"Do you think we are bound for Tien-Tsin?"

"I think we are bound for the Pei-Ho. The government intends to get into Peking, and save Minister Conger and his legation, as well as the other Americans. We may have a long fight to get there, though."

"Somebody said there had been a good deal of fighting around Tien-Tsin already."

"I don't doubt it; but you can't believe all that is reported, for the Chinese hold a good many lines of communication."

"It looks to me as if China was defying the whole civilized world."

"They don't want our religion or our people, and they don't want us to come over there and show them how to do things and to make improvements. They want to be left severely alone."

"But we have lots of Chinamen in our country."

"True enough; but the stay-at-home Celestial believes that his neighbor ought to stay at home, too. The average Chinaman, so I've heard, doesn't believe in moving about; and millions of them have never been fifty miles from home in their lives. They know absolutely nothing of the outside world, and our civilization is a closed book to them."

"Do you know how many troops the government intends to send to China?"

"I've heard that it is to be upward of ten thousand. General Chaffee is to leave San Francisco with some troops soon,—or he has left already,—and, when he arrives, he is to take command of the American forces on land."

“Why, I met General Chaffee in Cuba!” cried Gilbert. “He was one of the leaders in the Santiago campaign.”

“Yes, and he is an old and experienced army officer to boot. I think he will prove the right man in the right place.”

“He’s all right, I reckon,” put in a voice behind Gilbert at this juncture. “Lieutenant, you didn’t expect to meet me as a fellow-passenger, did you?”

The young lieutenant turned swiftly, for the voice had a familiar sound. He was almost struck dumb to find himself face to face with Nuggy Polk and his boon companion, Jerry Nickerson.

CHAPTER VIII

A DISCOVERY ON SHIPBOARD

"WHAT! you?" stammered Gilbert. For the moment he did not know what to say.

A brief glance told him that Nuggy Polk had entirely recovered from his spree of three days before; and so, also, had Jerry Nickerson. Both were freshly shaven, and dressed in clean outing suits of the latest pattern; and they looked as bright young Americans as are to be found anywhere.

"Yes, lieutenant," went on Nuggy Polk, with a good-natured laugh. "As I said before, you didn't expect to see me, did you?"

"Hardly," answered Gilbert, slowly. He was trying to determine how he should treat this fellow, who was in reality his enemy. "How did you manage to obtain passage on this transport?"

"Oh, I had to use a bit of diplomacy in order to get myself and my friend Jerry aboard; and it wouldn't be just right to expose how it was done.

You see, our little outing to the military camp up at the Manila water-works made us miss the regular steamer. But I was bound to get to China, anyway, and as soon as possible; and here we are."

"Perhaps you intend to join the army?" suggested Gilbert.

"Hardly." Nuggy Polk glanced at Major Morris. "Won't you introduce your friend? I know precious few fellows on board, and I should like to get acquainted."

The major was introduced; and then Nuggy Polk introduced "his one particular friend," Jerry Nickerson.

"Sorry I can't invite you down to the bar," said Polk. "But the government isn't up to date on those things." And he gave a light laugh.

"And a good thing," answered Major Morris. "We want to keep all our soldiers sober." He spoke pointedly; for Gilbert had told him of the first meeting with the sporty young man, and also of his family affairs, so far as they concerned the doings of the Richmond Importing Company.

Nuggy Polk's face grew red, and he looked on the point of saying something bitter; but this passed off,

and he changed the subject by remarking that he hoped the trip to China would prove a pleasant one.

"I understand Nagasaki is the first stop," put in Nickerson. "How long do you suppose it will take to reach that Japanese port?"

"Five or six days, most likely," answered Gilbert. "It will depend somewhat on the weather. These waters are full of islands and reefs, and a ship has to be mighty careful how she runs in foul weather."

"I hope we reach China in time to see the first real fighting," was Major Morris's comment; and then he was called away, and Gilbert was left alone with his new acquaintances.

"Lieutenant, I owe you something for what you did for us the other night," said Nuggy Polk, confidentially. "I don't know how I should have got back to Manila if it hadn't been for you."

"I am glad I was of service to you," answered Gilbert, coolly.

"But I owe you something, and I want to pay you," insisted the young man from Richmond, as he drew his ever-present roll of bills from his pocket.

"I want no pay for what I did at Manila," answered the young lieutenant, decidedly.

"But you put yourself out a good deal."

"If I did, it's all right."

"You acted as if you were my besom friend."

"Thank you for the compliment."

"Don't you think I mean it?"

"Certainly I do, Mr. Polk."

"Don't Mister me, lieutenant. Call me Nuggy. I'm not proud, even if I have money to spend."

"Then, Nuggy, let me tell you that it is all right, and that I don't wish a cent of your money."

"But you might as well have it."

"Oh, don't offend the lieutenant," put in Nickerson, as Gilbert remained silent. "If he doesn't want your money, put it up."

"I don't wish to offend anybody, and I will put it up," said Nuggy Polk, stiffly. "But, if he wants ten or twenty dollars, he is welcome to it."

"Thanks, but you can't hire me to take it," laughed Gilbert. "Let us talk about something else. Tell me about Richmond. I am always interested in news from Virginia. You told me, I believe, that you are in the importing trade."

"Yes, my father and I run the Richmond Importing Company. We export as well as import."

"And you have some trade in China, so you said."

"Yes, a large trade,—with Shanghai and Tien-Tsin."

"I am afraid that your trade is going to suffer on account of this war."

"That depends upon how you look at it. My belief is that this war won't amount to shucks."

"Exactly my idea," broke in Jerry Nickerson. "The soldiers will go there and relieve the ministers, and that will be the end of it. No foreign power will dare to make war on China because of the other powers."

"I am of the opinion that the war is already on around Taku and Tien-Tsin," answered Gilbert. "The forts at the mouth of the Pei-Ho have been taken, and that will probably madden the Chinese beyond endurance."

"Humph! A good deal of that is all talk," said Nuggy Polk. "When I reach Tien-Tsin, I expect to have no trouble whatever in landing and in transacting business."

"You are going to do business in Tien-Tsin?"

"I am, if I can find a man I am after,—a certain Amos Bartlett."

"You speak as if you had a bone to pick with him," said Gilbert, more to draw Nuggy Polk out than because he thought this was so.

"I have, and a big one," answered the young man, frowning. "Bartlett is getting too big for his boots. He has either got to get out of the company or there will be trouble."

"If the company is making money, perhaps he won't want to get out."

"We'll force him out. He is a bother, and in the way."

"It is not always so easy to force a man out of a thing,—especially if he knows what a good thing it is."

"I will do the trick," said Nuggy Polk, with a wink. "Trust me to work any deal that is to my advantage."

At this moment came an order from Captain Banner for company drill, and Gilbert had to leave the pair. No sooner had he gone than Jerry Nickerson said in a low tone, "Nuggy, I wouldn't be so free about talking over private affairs with an outsider."

"Oh, he's only a common soldier, Jerry. What harm can it do?"

"Never mind. I would be more close-mouthed if I were you."

"You get scared when there is absolutely nothing to scare you."

"I think it pays to be cautious."

"I am cautious — when there is need for it."

"No, you are not. Before you get through, you will tell everybody that you are going to do Amos Bartlett out of his shares in the Richmond Importing Company."

"Bosh!"

"All right. I know you."

"See here, Jerry Nickerson, who is running this affair?" cried Nuggy Polk, angrily. "You talk as if I were a child in apron-strings."

"I am only trying to give you a bit of sound advice; but you won't take it, and perhaps you'll have to suffer."

"Rats!" was the sporty young man's characteristic response, and he stalked off to watch the drill.

In the confined space on the transport but little marching could be done, yet one company after another went through the manual of arms, including the acts of loading, aiming, and firing at an imaginary

foe; and there were such commands as "right face," "left wheel," and the like, all of which interested the few spectators at hand. The regimental band on board played from time to time, to make the hours pass more pleasantly and keep the men from feeling homesick.

Although Nuggy Polk did not care to admit it, Nickerson's words made him feel somewhat anxious concerning his talks with Gilbert. In a dim way he remembered something of what he had said on the road outside of Manila, and he wondered if he had told more than was desirable.

"I was a fool to get drunk," he muttered to himself. "I'll take good care not to get that way again." But this mental promise amounted to nothing, for such promises had been made and broken a dozen times before. What Nuggy Polk needed was a thorough reformation, and this could not come too soon.

While the company of which Gilbert was first lieutenant was drilling, Nuggy Polk drew close to a group of soldiers from another command who were watching the manœuvres, and entered into conversation with one of the number.

"They seem to do first-rate," said he. "I reckon they have a first-class captain."

"Yes, Captain Banner is all right," answered the private addressed. "He is an old officer, and went through the fights in Cuba before he came to the Philippines."

"And Lieutenant Gilbert seems to know his business, too," went on the young man.

"You mean Lieutenant Pennington," corrected the soldier.

"Pennington!" exclaimed Nuggy Polk. "I mean that officer there." And he pointed with his hand.

"That is Lieutenant Pennington."

"His full name is Gilbert Pennington," put in a soldier standing by, who had overheard the conversation.

"Humph! He told me it was Gilbert. I wonder why—by George!" And of a sudden Nuggy Polk's face grew dark.

"What did you say?" asked the soldier the young man had first addressed.

"Nothing,—that is, I was under the impression the lieutenant's last name was Gilbert. Where does he come from, do you know?"

"He's a Southerner."

"You don't know anything about him further than that?"

The soldier shook his head. "I might find out for you," he added.

"Thanks, but it won't be necessary," replied Nuggy Polk, and walked away, his mind filled with sudden and strange forebodings.

CHAPTER IX

GILBERT REACHES A CONCLUSION

"If that fellow has been playing me for a fool, he had better look out for himself!"

Such was the conclusion which Nuggy Polk reached, after thinking over what he had learned and what had taken place between himself and Gilbert since the two had met on the road outside of Manila. The young man was thoroughly out of humor, and was aching to "pitch into" the young lieutenant.

"Well, Nuggy, you look as black as a thunder-cloud," said Jerry Nickerson, as he strolled up. "Don't take what I said so much to heart. I only wanted to give you a friendly bit of advice."

"I know you did; and it's too bad that you didn't give it to me before," answered the young man, bitterly, and before he had a chance to think twice.

"Why, what do you mean? Has something happened?"

"It has and it hasn't. That lieutenant's name is

Pennington — Gilbert Pennington — instead of just Gilbert. He deceived me when he introduced himself."

"Perhaps you didn't catch his full name."

"I am sure I caught what he said. Don't you suppose, if he had said Pennington, I should have remembered it?"

"Possibly not. A fellow doesn't remember all the names he hears."

"But this case is different, Jerry. The name Pennington is one I shall remember, no matter where I hear it."

Jerry Nickerson looked puzzled for a moment, and then emitted a low whistle. "By Jove! I had forgotten. It was a Jefferson Pennington who started the Richmond Importing Company, and whose widow gave your father so much trouble."

"Exactly; and, for all I know, this lieutenant may be some relative of that man. He comes from Virginia."

"That is rather far-fetched. Still, it may be; and, if I were you, I'd be for finding out."

"I will find out — and pretty quick, too."

"Hold on! You mustn't let him know you are

suspicious, Nuggy. Go to somebody else, and find out."

"I am not afraid of him; and, if he has been playing the sneak, I'll give him a bit of my mind, I can tell you that."

"You must remember that he is an officer, and that his colonel is in control here. If you do anything rash, the young officer may have you put in the brig for it."

"Do you think they would dare to go as far as that?" questioned Nuggy, looking much disturbed.

"They would dare do almost anything. On an expedition like this, private citizens are counted as being in the way, at the best."

"Then, of course, I'll have to pull in my horns, Jerry. But it makes me mad to think he may have been imposing on me."

"If I were you, I'd try to find out something about him from the other soldiers; and, if he really is a relative to Jefferson Pennington, and is trying to pump you in order to get money out of your father, then I'd run a game up his back."

"How?"

"I wouldn't let him know what I had learned, and

I'd continue to treat him as a friend; and at the same time I'd let drop that I was doing things on the square, and that the Penningtons had got all that was coming to them out of the Importing Company."

This advice seemed to strike Nuggy Polk's fancy, and he said that he would follow it. For the rest of the day he avoided Gilbert, and spent the time in trying to find somebody who could give him something of the young lieutenant's history.

By chance he struck Carl Stummer, whom he had seen in conversation with Gilbert a number of times. Stummer had taken greatly to the young lieutenant ever since the pair had been thrown together, and knew a good deal of the young officer's past.

"Your first lieutenant seems to be a popular man," said Nuggy Polk, by way of an opening.

"Lieutenant Pennington vos von goot fellow," answered Stummer. "Of all dere officers vos so goot, der army vould been a baradise, almost."

"I understand he is a Southerner, like myself."

"Dot vos so; but he vos in New York ven he got der var fever, und enlisted mit der Rough Riders for Cuba. You neffer enlisted, eh?"

"No. I — er — couldn't get away from business."

"Vot you vos do on der dransport, den? Maype you vos von newsbaber man?"

"That's a little in my line. Here, have a cigar." Nuggy Polk passed over a weed. "I am interested in the lieutenant. Did you ever hear of what business he was in?"

"I dink he vos a pook-keeper ven der var proke out."

"I used to know some Penningtons down South," went on Nuggy Polk, boldly. "They were in an importing company at Richmond."

"Der lieutenant's fadder vos vonce in an imbort-ing company in Richmond. I heard him tell mine friend Captain Russell so von tay."

"Indeed!" Nuggy Polk paused a moment. "Well, it doesn't matter particularly," he went on; and then asked Carl Stummer about his life in the army, and spoke of what might be expected in China, thus trying to put the German soldier "off the track," as he afterward told Nickerson.

Nuggy Polk had learned enough to convince him that Gilbert was either the son of Jefferson Pennington or closely related to the dead man; and the news disturbed him a good deal.

"For all I know, he may have been spying on me in Manila," he said to Nickerson.

"I don't see how he can possibly hurt you," was the reply. "Perhaps he knows little or nothing of the past."

"Then what was his object in introducing himself as Lieutenant Gilbert? I half believe he followed us from Manila. The clerk at the hotel said something about his being there earlier in the day, although I didn't pay any attention to it at the time."

"As an officer in the army, he has got to attend to his official duties. If I were you, I'd leave him severely alone; and I believe the whole thing will drop then and there. Even if he is Jefferson Pennington's son, he can't rake up that old claim, can he?"

"I don't know but that he can. Your father was the lawyer who passed on the papers in the case, and you have had all his records since he died. You ought to know more about it than I do."

At this, Jerry Nickerson's face took on a cunning look. "I do know a good deal, and don't deny it. But I reckon your father is safe—if he keeps his mouth shut."

"This Pennington may combine with Amos Bart-

lett. I was foolish enough to name Bartlett to him."

"Yes, that was a bad move, Nuggy. After this you must be as mum as an oyster."

Nuggy Polk agreed to this, yet he felt very much as if he was locking the stable door after the horse was stolen. It is said that "a guilty conscience is its own accuser," and it was largely so in the present instance.

On the third day out, the island of Formosa was sighted far in the west; and the course was now north-north-east, past numerous small islands and rocks, straight for Nagasaki, which lies, as many of my young readers must know, close to the entrance to the Yellow Sea. The weather continued to be all that was desired, and many a soldier, tired out with his campaigning in the Philippines, wished that the voyage might last a long time.

"Sure, an' it almost makes me wisht I was a sailor," observed Dan Casey. "A loife on the rol-lin' dape seems jest to suit me."

"You have your sea legs now, Dan," replied Gilbert, who stood by. "But you didn't have **them** when we came to the Philippines."

"Mine cracious, dot's so!" laughed Carl Stummer. "Ton't you rememper how ve rolled und pitched around like ve vos rupper palls?" he added to Casey.

"Sure, an' I do that," responded the Irishman. "An' do yez remimber the hurricane, an' how it thundered an' lightnined?"

"Excuse me, put I ton't vont no sthorm," said Carl. "Dot vos enough to last a whole life und two veeks more, py chiminy!" And he shook his head gravely.

A moment later he saw Nuggy Polk pass, in company with Nickerson, and called Gilbert's attention to the pair.

"Dot man on der outside vos ask me apout you, lieutenant," he said. "He seemed to pe anxious to know you."

"Indeed?" said Gilbert. "What did he ask you?"

As well as he could, Stummer repeated the conversation he had had with Nuggy Polk. The reader can well imagine that the young lieutenant listened with interest.

"I am much obliged, Carl," he said at the conclu-

sion. "I'll have a talk with the fellow later on." And then he walked away, to think the matter over.

He was much perplexed, and hardly knew what to do next. Would it be possible to corner Polk, and, if so, would the game be worth the candle?

"The thing happened so many years ago, and at the best the matter would drag through the courts, perhaps for years," he reasoned. "And to prosecute the Polks would take a lot of money, which I haven't got. It looks like a wild-goose chase."

Major Morris found him seated on a camp-chair in a corner of the deck, deep in thought. The sun had set far over the land in the west; and the stars were peeping forth one by one, dotting the flowing and rolling ocean with innumerable tiny lights. At the bow of the transport a dozen soldiers were singing,—one old favorite of home after another,—and at the stern somebody was strumming a banjo, and two privates were doing a "buck and wing" dance to the delight of the onlookers.

"You look serious, lieutenant," observed the major, as he dropped in a chair beside Gilbert.

"I feel a bit serious," was the answer, with a quiet smile. "Major, I should like your advice."

"You are welcome to it. Do you want to know what I think of that young man you pointed out to me?"

"Yes."

"I think he is an equal compound of conceit and slyness,— a fellow who is to be trusted as far as you can see him, and no more."

"He has taken the pains to find out who I am."

"I don't wonder at it. I am surprised he didn't do so before."

"As he now knows who I am, he must know that I am interested in the case which my mother brought against the Richmond Importing Company."

"Undoubtedly, and he will do all he can to head you off—providing you make any movement he thinks detrimental to his or his father's interests."

"That is what I have been thinking, and I'm wondering if it would be worth while to fight the thing."

"Not unless you can get direct evidence against the elder Polk. If I were you, I'd try to hunt up this Amos Bartlett the first chance I got."

"I'll do that."

"He may know something, or be able to put you on the track of something."

"I hope he proves a friend."

"Perhaps it wouldn't be a bad plan to write to some first-class lawyer in Richmond, asking him to look the matter up for you. Very often you can get a lawyer to take up a case on shares, if he thinks there is money in it."

"That's an idea!" cried Gilbert. "I know a lawyer, a good fellow, named Branders, whom I met in Cuba. He was from Richmond, and I know he'll do all he can for me."

"Then write to him by all means, stating your case in detail, and tell him that you are going to hunt up Amos Bartlett, if you can."

"I suppose I can mail the letter at Nagasaki."

"To be sure, and it will go quicker than if you had mailed it at Manila."

"This Polk seems to be very thick with Nickerson. I wonder if they have talked me over between them."

"If they talk your case over, it is a pity that you can't hear what is said," returned the major, pointedly. "I believe I would watch every move they make, so far as was in my power."

"I will."

“Polk is no doubt your enemy; and you have a perfect right to get the better of him, if you can.”

By this time others were coming up, Captain Banner and two under officers; and the talk became general, the coming campaign in China being, however, the chief topic of conversation.

Gilbert was sitting with his back to a window opening into the upper cabin of the transport. As the topic of conversation shifted, a form arose from a settee standing in the cabin, close to the window, the sash of which had been lowered to let in the air. The form was that of Jerry Nickerson, and the young man had taken in all that had been said.

“So he is going to write to Ralph Branders, eh?” he muttered, as he strode off. “And he is going to sound Amos Bartlett, too. I reckon this will make interesting news for Nuggy. I’ll have to hunt him up at once, and see what he has to say about it.”

CHAPTER X

ABOUT AN IMPORTANT LETTER

JERRY NICKERSON found Nuggy Polk in another portion of the cabin, reading one of the books belonging to the ship's library.

"Come to our state-room," he said. "I have something important to tell you."

"What about?"

"About Gilbert Pennington."

Nuggy arose at once, and followed his companion to the state-room which had been assigned to them. The quarters were cramped; but they were much better than those occupied by the soldiers, who slept in long rows of canvas cots, suspended between uprights of "gas-piping," as the supports were commonly called. Only the colonel and the majors had private compartments: even the captains slept with their men.

When Nuggy heard what his chum had to tell, his face grew dark and full of bitter hatred.

"That makes it certain he is in a game against me and my father," he said. "Unless I take good care of myself, he will prove a regular snake in the grass. I wish I could pitch him overboard."

"You will have to be extra careful of what you say after this, Nuggy. If I were you, I wouldn't mention the Importing Company in his presence again."

"I won't."

"If he brings up the subject, treat it in an off-handed way, and try to convince him that everything is all right, and that you were fooling when you spoke about squeezing out those other people."

"Trust me to smooth it over — if I get the chance," responded Nuggy. "But I wish I could get hold of that letter he intends to send."

The next day slipped by without the young lieutenant and Polk coming into contact with each other. Gilbert had several important duties to attend to, and only saw Nuggy from a distance. In the evening Gilbert sat down in the cabin to write the letter to Ralph Branders.

It was no easy task to compose the epistle, for the young lieutenant hardly knew how to introduce the

subject. But he had met Branders on the field of San Juan, and felt that he could trust the young and rising lawyer thoroughly; and he ended by relating his case from start to finish. He asked Branders to investigate, and promised to remunerate the lawyer as far as was within his means.

Nuggy saw Gilbert penning the letter, and watched him very much as a cat watches a mouse.

"I'd give a hundred dollars to get that letter from him," the young man said to himself. But how this could be accomplished without the young lieutenant being the wiser was a difficult problem to solve.

The letter finished, Gilbert placed it in the inner pocket of his coat, a garment which he wore at all times when on duty. Polk had hoped to see him place it in some corner or in the general mail-basket in the cabin, and was much disappointed.

The transport continued on her course until, late one afternoon, a small island to the eastward was sighted. It proved to be Ujise, about one hundred and ten miles directly south of Nagasaki.

"We'll reach Nagasaki to-morrow," said Captain Banner to Gilbert. "And I must say that I shall not be sorry to finish that much of the voyage."

"You are not much of a sea-dog, captain."

"It isn't that, Pennington: I am anxious to get into the fight,—if there is any fighting."

"Oh, so am I," replied Gilbert quickly. "I am curious to learn the latest news. I wonder if the Allies have moved on Tien-Tsin yet?"

"More than likely, since that lies between Taku and Pekin."

The day was cloudy, and toward midnight the wind came up strongly. As the course of the transport was now along numerous islands and between dangerous reefs, she had to proceed slowly and with caution.

For some reason Gilbert had a headache, and retired early. As was usual, he slipped off only his coat and shoes, placing the former under his pillow.

Although he did not know it, his movements were closely watched by Nuggy Polk, who had made up his mind that he must obtain possession of the letter, were such a thing possible. As the hour was early, there were but few soldiers below. So the coast was comparatively clear.

Almost holding his breath, for fear of awakening

the sleeper, Nuggy approached Gilbert on tiptoe, and made certain that the young lieutenant was in the land of slumber. Slowly he pulled the coat from under the pillow, and inserted his hand in the pocket.

The letter was there, along with several unimportant papers, and with a skill worthy of a better cause the young man brought them forth and thrust them into his own pocket. This done, he left the berth deck silently and swiftly, and made his way to his state-room.

"By Jove! Nuggy, you look scared," cried Jerry Nickerson, as he entered. "What has happened?"

"Hush!" Nuggy held up his hand warningly. "I just got that letter away from Pennington." And in a whisper he related how the deed had been accomplished.

"That was slick. But I'm afraid, when Pennington finds his letter missing, he'll write another in its place."

"He won't find anything missing," answered Nuggy, with a grin.

"Do you mean to say you are going to put the letter back?" demanded Nickerson, in astonishment.

"I'm going to put the envelope back — after I have refilled it with several sheets of blank paper."

"By Jove! Nuggy, you are getting slicker every day."

"Ralph Branders won't know where the blank paper came from, and of course he won't do anything. In the mean time I will send the letter to my father, with the full particulars of all I have learned; and, when Pennington makes his next move, we'll be more than ready for him."

With great care Nuggy Polk opened the letter addressed to the Richmond lawyer, being cautious not to tear the envelope. Once open, the closely written pages inside were abstracted; and then the envelope was refilled with pages from a blank writing pad, after which it was sealed up once more as before.

When Nuggy revisited the berth deck, he found Gilbert sleeping as sound as ever. Hurrying up, he began to place the letter in the young lieutenant's coat.

As mentioned before, the wind was rising. Consequently, the transport was not riding as easily as earlier on the trip. Just as Nuggy placed his hand

in the coat, a lurch of the vessel sent him with a bump into one of the uprights supporting Gilbert's cot, and then landed him flat on his back in the passageway.

"Oh!" cried the young man, and scrambled to his feet as quickly as possible. But the rolling of the ship and the noise made by Nuggy awoke Gilbert on the instant.

"What's the matter?" cried the young lieutenant, and sat up, staring around him. Before he could get to his feet, Nuggy Polk was making off down the dim passageway, which was illuminated by only a few incandescent lights.

"Phwat's the matter, lieutenant?" came from Dan Casey, who was dozing on the edge of his cot, not far off.

"That man — what was he doing here?" demanded Gilbert.

"Sure, an' I dunno. Stop there!" cried Casey. But Nuggy only ran the faster, and in a few seconds disappeared from view.

"I believe he was at my coat," went on Gilbert, as he picked the garment from the floor. Under the coat lay the documents and the sealed envelope.



NUGGY POLK WAS MAKING OFF DOWN THE DIM PASSAGEWAY. — Page 98.

“Well, if he was after anything, he didn’t get it,” he added, as he placed the things in the pocket and put the coat under his pillow again. “I wonder who it was?”

“Sames to me it was the feller that was talkin’ to Stummer the other day,—that sport av a young man.”

“You mean Mr. Polk?” demanded Gilbert.

“I don’t know his handle, but the feller as was askin’ about you.”

“That is the man I mean.” Gilbert’s brow grew clouded. “If that was the man, he was up to no good.”

“Is he down on you, lieutenant?”

“I have every reason to believe he is, although I don’t care to talk about it.”

“Do ye suppose he was afther stalin’ somethin’?”

“I can’t say what he was after, Dan. But I wish he would keep his distance after this.”

“Perhaps ye had better be afther reportin’ him.”

“No, I’ll keep my eyes open; and I reckon that will be enough.”

Gilbert sank back to rest again, but it was a long while before he fell asleep. He wondered if Nuggy

Polk had been after the letter. "If he was, he didn't get it," he told himself; "and I'll take good care that he doesn't get another chance at it."

When Nuggy Polk reached his state-room, he was almost out of breath and as white as a sheet. Coming inside, he locked the door, and began to pull off his clothing with all possible speed.

"What's up now?" questioned Nickerson.

"The roll of the boat upset me, and I woke the lieutenant up," was the low answer. "I don't know but that they are after me. Keep quiet; and, if they come here, we'll pretend we are asleep, and have been for over an hour."

Nuggy soon had his shoes and clothing off; and, still trembling with excitement, he crept into his bunk, and lay there in silence, listening for a knock on the door. But the minutes went by, and nobody came; and at last he breathed easier.

"They didn't spot me, after all," he chuckled. "I reckon I was too quick for them."

"Did you return the bogus letter?" asked his companion.

"Yes."

"Then you are safe on the writing question?"

“Sure. Pennington won’t suspect a thing, and of course Branders won’t know where the blank sheet came from. The first move in this game is entirely in my favor,” concluded Nuggy; and, much satisfied with himself, he rolled over, and was soon in the land of dreams.

CHAPTER XI

THE RELIEF OF ADMIRAL SEYMOUR'S PARTY

THE transport carrying the regiment to which Gilbert was attached arrived at Nagasaki on July 2. She dropped anchor in the place assigned to her by the harbor-master, and her chief officer went ashore at once for despatches..

The sights to be seen in the large harbor of the Japanese sea-port interested Gilbert greatly. Strange craft were floating there,—curiously carved junks with their huge, awkward sails, broad merchantmen, and *cascoes* filled with fruits and fish and other commodities, all offered for sale to whoever might buy. Not far from the transport lay the British torpedo-boat destroyer *Whiting*, having on board a number of veteran soldiers from Ladysmith, South Africa, men who had gone all through the terrible campaign against the Boers. Russian, French, German, and Italian warships were also in evidence; and the number of national flags floating there were a spectacle in themselves.

"We have struck the Allies at last," was Captain Banner's comment. "I have already counted ten different flags, not to mention the banners belonging to the Japanese shipping."

"Or the Banner we are carrying," put in Major Morris, by way of a joke.

"Don't, major! That pun on my name is old enough to vote," answered the captain of Company A.

"Then it is time it was buried," said the major, promptly. "I'll never pun on your name again." And he never did.

All the soldiers were anxious for news from shore; and this was not long in coming, in the shape of newspapers, letters, and cablegrams.

"General Chaffee has left San Francisco with the first American troops for China, on the transport *Grant*," said one of the captains, spreading the news. "He is coming direct to Nagasaki; and he will be followed by four or five thousand other men, from Cuba, New York, and elsewhere."

The *Grant* carried the Sixth United States Cavalry, eight hundred strong, and about three hundred sailors and marines.

The news from the front was most conflicting. Admiral Seymour, in command of the expedition which had gone to the relief of Peking, was rumored to be somewhere beyond Tien-Tsin, and surrounded by the enemy. The foreign quarter of Tien-Tsin had been bombarded by the Boxers and Chinese government troops for over a week after the taking of the Taku forts, and the sufferings of the Americans and others had been almost beyond belief. During the bombardment, women and children had been shut up in Gordon Hall, and shot and shell had rained down on all sides. At this time there was an American circus in the city; and the men of the show took up rifles, buckled on cartridge belts, and went to the walls with the few troops in the place, to hold the enemy in check.

The relief of Tien-Tsin was largely due to the efforts of one man to get word of what was going on to the allied powers having warships and soldiers in the Gulf of Pechili. When the bombardment of the foreign quarter of the city was at its height, nine men from the various legations took a boat and started for Taku for help. This boat was attacked by the Chinese; and those in it had to run the craft

ashore and take to the bushes and woods, in order to escape with their lives.

In Tien-Tsin it was rumored that the nine men had been killed, and that it would prove certain death to anybody undertaking to get through the Chinese lines. Yet the task was undertaken by James Watts, a youth of twenty-two, the son of a Taku pilot.

"I'll get through, if it costs me everything but my life," said young Watts. "I've outwitted the Chinks before, and I can do it again." He left Tien-Tsin at nightfall on the swiftest horse the city possessed.

The ride was one long to be remembered; for it covered a distance of forty to forty-five miles, through a territory thick with Boxers and other Chinese, all anxious to take his life at sight. He left the city with caution, but, once on the outskirts, rode with a dash and daring that overcame many of the enemy with fright and surprise. Shots innumerable were fired at him; but only one struck him, in the arm. He was stopped six times, but in each instance literally rode over those who sought to capture him.

When he arrived at Taku, he was ready to drop from exhaustion. But, without waiting to obtain even necessary refreshments, he secured a row-boat, and had some sailors take him out to the flagship of Admiral Kempff of the United States Navy, to whom he told his story in detail.

Our admiral was quick to act on the information received, and word was at once passed to the other warships and to the allied forces in and around Taku and Tongku. A relief force was immediately organized, consisting of four hundred Russian and one hundred American troops, the latter under Major Waller.

The march of the relief force was steady, up the bank of the Pei-Ho, but, as Tien-Tsin was neared, the resistance of the Chinese became stronger; and on the second day out it looked as if the allied forces would be surrounded and annihilated. But a force of one thousand British troops came up soon after this, and after a hard fight the relief guard entered the foreign quarter of Tien-Tsin.

This was as much as was known at Nagasaki when Gilbert arrived there; but other movements of great importance had taken place, and some of

these were not yet finished. Arriving in Tien-Tsin, the relief column discovered that Admiral Seymour's command had only gotten to within forty miles of Peking, and had then had to retreat. Many of the number would have been cut to pieces, had it not been for the bravery of the American commander, Captain McCalla, and his fighting marines from the *Newark*.

As soon after the entrance to Tien-Tsin had been made as possible, another relief force went out from that city to look for Admiral Seymour, this command being composed of some of the troops which had just entered the city and some that had just come up from Taku. It was reported that the Seymour party was intrenched nine miles from Tien-Tsin. The relief force was less than two miles from Tien-Tsin, when the Boxers hove in sight; and a desperate hand to hand encounter ensued, in which many Russians and Japanese, as well as some Americans and English, were killed. The Boxers were beaten, and fell back up the river, where they were re-enforced by the Chinese regulars, and another battle ensued. But the Allies were protected by the high railroad embankment, and soon put the Chinese troops to flight

by the accuracy of their fire. After the contest, hundreds of lifeless Celestials were found floating in the river.

The onward march of the relief column was now toward a large arsenal, which, it was rumored, was filled with guns and ammunition. On sighting the arsenal, it was discovered to be in the possession of the troops under Admiral Seymour, who had taken it from the Chinese some days before. The Celestials were doing their best to retake the buildings, nine in number, when the relief column came up with a rush; and the upholders of the Dragon were forced to withdraw, with another heavy loss.

The new-comers were hailed with joy by those in the arsenal, who had considered their position well-nigh hopeless, they having been continually surrounded by large bodies of Chinese troops since the start from Taku two weeks before. It was decided to abandon the arsenal at once, and return to Tien-Tsin; and this was done, the building being set on fire. Later on the Chinese tried to put out the fire, and many were injured by the explosions of powder and dynamite which occurred.

“Do you know anything about the Chinese army,

—I mean how it is composed?" asked Gilbert of Captain Banner, as they continued to watch the shipping in Nagasaki Harbor.

"I do, because that is another play on my name," replied the commander of Company A. "The Chinese army is made up of eight divisions, called the Three Superior Banners and the Five Inferior Banners, and number from two hundred thousand to three hundred thousand men. Each Banner has ten army corps; and these are divided into *Lyanza*, of about two hundred and fifty men each."

"Then we have a pretty big crowd to whip," was Gilbert's comment.

"That is the Chinese army on paper. In reality, the standing army is much smaller; for each viceroy of a province keeps as many troops as suits him. The army is made up of the very scum of China, and a soldier is an object of ridicule to the ordinary merchant or artisan."

"I've heard that many Chinese officers go to war in their robes."

"They do more than that," put in an officer standing near. "They take their big umbrellas as well, and on many a battlefield the head officers have sat

in the rear having tea served to them while the fighting was going on. You see, there are so many of the pig-tails that the slaughter of a few thousand of them now and then doesn't disturb those in authority in the least."

"Sure, an' that's not encouragin' fer us," observed Dan Casey, who stood by, drinking in the conversation with much interest.

"No; but I'll tell you one thing, and that's true," said Captain Banner. "I have it from a number of officers who have served in China. The majority of the Chinamen rely on the signs they wear on their breasts to protect them from the 'foreign devils.' When they see their comrades shot down, regardless of these signs, nine out of ten throw down their guns and take to their heels."

"How many warships do you suppose are in these waters now?" said Gilbert.

"Probably a hundred or more. I understand we have about fifteen, Russia the same number, and England almost twice as many, while Germany and France have a dozen or more, and Japan nearly half a hundred," answered Major Morris.

"And how many soldiers are there?"

“There is no telling. We have probably four or five thousand, here and on the way ; and England has twice as many. The majority of troops are, of course, Russian and Japanese, since they were close at hand when the trouble broke out,” concluded the major of the first battalion.

CHAPTER XII

A STORM AND A QUARREL

"THE mail is going ashore, lieutenant. So hand over your letters, if you have any."

It was the adjutant's assistant, who was making the round of the transport, previous to his departure for the Nagasaki post-office. He already had one bag full of letters, and was now picking up a second.

"All right. I'll have a letter for you in a few minutes," responded Gilbert. "I just want to make sure that I put everything in this that I wanted."

"Writing to your best girl, eh?" laughed the other officer. "Well, send her lots of kisses."

"I haven't got that far yet, Peters," responded the young lieutenant, with a laugh equally hearty. "This is a strictly business letter."

"Is that so? Seems to me we are pretty far away from home to do any business except that of fighting."

"That is true, and yet—" Gilbert broke off short. "Hullo! What in the world does this mean?"

He had torn open the envelope addressed to Ralph Branders, and was now staring in amazement at the blank sheets of paper it had contained.

"Blank sheets, eh? Well, you must have been asleep when you put them into the envelope," was the comment of the adjutant's assistant. "Or else somebody has been putting up a joke on you," he added.

Gilbert did not reply, for the reason that he was just then doing some rapid thinking. He remembered how he had been aroused by Nuggy Polk and how he had found the sealed envelope on the passageway floor.

"I believe he tampered with that letter," he said to himself. "He took out my written sheets, and substituted these blanks. He is shrewder than I thought him to be."

"Well, lieutenant, what are you going to do about it?" asked the adjutant's assistant. "I've got to be going inside of ten minutes."

"I'll hunt up my letter—if I can," burst out

Gilbert; and, thrusting the empty envelope in his pocket, he hurried off.

He was thoroughly angry, and bent on hunting up Nuggy Polk and having it out with the young man. He had seen Nuggy at the stern of the transport, smoking, and had no doubt that he would still find the young man there.

But, half-way on his rapid walk toward the stern, Gilbert came to a sudden halt. What if Polk should deny everything, and what if the rascal had destroyed the written pages? He could not prove the young man guilty, and such an action would only let Polk know that he had discovered the deception. Would it not be better to let the fellow imagine that his plan to outwit his opponent had proved successful?

"I'll let him rest, and write another letter in secret — and take good care that that goes," said Gilbert to himself. "And in the second letter I'll tell Branders how the first letter was stolen, and that he must be on his guard against the Polks and anybody who represents them."

With Gilbert to think was to act, in this case; and, without losing a second more, he rushed off to one of the desks in the ship's library, secured several sheets

of paper and a pen, and dashed off a second letter to Ralph Branders with all speed. It was easy work, for he remembered exactly what he had said in the first letter; and the young lieutenant had always been a rapid penman. He added to the epistle his suspicions concerning Nuggy Polk, and wound up by assuring Branders that he was certain there was a good deal of money coming to him, if only the truth of the matter could be unearthed.

The letter was finished not a second too soon; for Gilbert had barely time in which to hand it to the adjutant's assistant when the latter was off, to catch the United States mail from Nagasaki.

"Made quick work of it, I see," remarked Peters, as he stuffed the letter into one of his bags.

"I had to," answered Gilbert. "I wouldn't have missed this mail for a good deal."

The young lieutenant hurried away, not wishing to be seen by Nuggy Polk. His duties soon took him to the stern; and there he found the young man, still smoking, in company with Jerry Nickerson.

"Ah! lieutenant," cried Nuggy, as he drew closer. "We were just wondering how long it would be before we would start for Taku. Have you any idea?"

"The commander is waiting only for some additional despatches," answered Gilbert, coldly.

"Then we are to leave Nagasaki as soon as he gets them?"

"So I have been informed."

"I am glad of it. I don't like this hot hole at all," growled Nickerson. "It's worse than Manila."

"I reckon you'll find China hotter still," said Gilbert.

"I hope not."

"By the way, we made a curious mistake in your name," went on Nuggy, looking straight out to sea as he spoke. "We thought it was Lieutenant Gilbert, while we've learned since that it is Lieutenant Gilbert Pennington. You'll pardon us, I'm sure."

"Of course," said Gilbert, and looked pointedly at Nuggy and then at Nickerson, both of whom avoided his gaze. "It doesn't amount to anything, anyway."

"I'm glad you look at in that light, lieutenant. Some people are awfully particular about names, you know," continued Nuggy.

He wished to say more,—to bring around the statement that he had known the Penningtons years

before, in Richmond; but he could not see his way clear without making an awkward break, and that he wished to avoid. Gilbert passed on, and there the matter rested for the time being.

The run from Nagasaki to Taku is, in round figures, eight hundred miles, the course being past Quelpart Island, up the Yellow Sea, and around the Shantung Peninsula into the Gulf of Pechili. Part of the run was along the south-western coast of Korea; but, in the haze that covered the sea, nothing could be seen of that territory.

The weather continued to be all that was desired until the transport gained the vicinity of the Shantung Peninsula, upon which the British port of Wei-Hai-Wei is situated, when a violent storm came up late in the afternoon. It had been extremely hot, but now the temperature went down as if by magic.

"We are in for it," remarked Major Morris, as he watched the sky grow black. "Just listen to that wind coming up!"

"I am glad we are not in a sailing vessel," responded Gilbert. "It looks as if it was going to blow great guns, as the jackies say."

Gilbert was right; for, soon after the sun was hidden

behind the dense clouds, the wind came up with a rush, whistling through the windows and ports of the ship and banging many an unlatched door. Some of the soldiers were not looking for such a gust; and one lost his hat overboard, and another a precious bundle of newspapers obtained in Nagasaki at the cost of three Mexican dollars.

"We are up against it fer kapes!" cried Dan Casey, as he vainly tried to keep his feet. "Sure, an' I'm goin' below to kape from fallin' all over meself!" And he lost no time in literally sliding out of sight, for to keep erect on the companionway was impossible.

Some of the soldiers were at mess when the storm came up; and, as pea soup happened to be on the bill of fare, my readers can imagine how the contents of the tin soup plates were slopped around, much to the ire of the owners of the soup and the anger of those who happened to get the boiling hot liquid over them.

Nuggy Polk and Jerry Nickerson had just finished their repast when the first heavy blow struck the transport, sending the craft almost on her beams' end. Both had eaten heartily of a great variety of food, for

they had had the quartermaster lay in an extra supply for them at Nagasaki.

"Gracious! what's struck us?" cried Jerry, in alarm.

"Feels to me as if we were going to upset," replied Nuggy, his face growing pale. "Just listen to the wind whistle!"

"I hope we don't go to the bottom," went on Nickerson.

He did not like the ocean, and had come along on the trip only at the earnest solicitation of Nuggy, who hated to travel alone. He was no sailor, but so far the mildness of the weather had kept him from becoming seasick.

Both of the young men felt that they must go on deck, and started for the companionway side by side.

They had just reached the foot of the steps, when a dark object loomed up before them. It was a soldier, who was actually rolling down the companionway. The man plumped with such force into Jerry Nickerson that the latter was sent sprawling.

"Hi! what do you mean by knocking me down?" spluttered Nickerson, as soon as he could get wind enough to speak.

"Vot's der matter mit you?" was the return. "Vy didn't you git out of der vay, ven you see me coming, hey?" The speaker was Carl Stummer, and he was in no humor for wasting words.

"You Dutch idiot!" roared Nickerson. "You bumped into me on purpose!"

"That's what he did," put in Nuggy, who had not liked Carl since the day they had had the talk concerning Gilbert. "Jerry, you ought to teach him a lesson for that."

"I will," answered Jerry; and, as the German soldier arose to his feet, Nickerson strode forward, and gave him a blow in the chest which knocked him up against a near-by railing. "That will teach you to behave yourself in the future."

In his school-days Nickerson had been a good deal of a bully, and this at times cropped out, upon the slightest provocation. As Carl staggered back, Nuggy gave a low laugh.

"Good for you, Jerry! He deserved it," he said.

Carl's face grew as red as a beet; and his eyes — those eyes which were sky-blue, and generally as mild as those of a lamb — flashed fire.

“So I vos von Dutch idiot, hey?” he demanded angrily. “And you vos teach me von lesson, not so? Meppe I vos teach dot lesson, hey? How you like dot, hey? und dot?”

He hauled off suddenly; and two blows straight from the shoulder made Jerry see stars, and sent him staggering into Nuggy. A third blow followed, which loosened one of Nickerson's front teeth, and made him drop upon a near-by settee, dazed and bewildered.

“Haf you got enough?” demanded Carl, as he followed his opponent with fists clenched for another blow.

“Don't! Don't!” cried Nickerson.

“Hi! let my friend alone!” came from Nuggy, in alarm. He was afraid Nickerson would be killed. “Let him alone, I say, you clown!”

“Ton't call me a klown!” roared Carl. “Of you do, I'll gif you a lickin', too!” And he squared off at Nuggy in a manner which caused that unworthy one to fall back in dismay.

By this time the attention of a number of soldiers who were near was attracted, and they gathered around. “A fight, boys!” cried one. “The Dutch-

man is going to polish off one of the newspaper men!"

"Go for him, Carl, and show him how we licked the Tagals!"

"Make them fight one at a time, Dutchy! Two to one isn't fair."

"Form a ring, boys, and let 'em have it out to a finish."

So the talk ran on, and soon the crowd grew larger. Then Jerry Nickerson tried to hit Carl again. The German dodged, struck out swiftly and surely, and in an instant Nickerson measured his length on the deck, and lay there like a log.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LANDING AT TONGKU

"STUMMER has knocked his man out! My, but that was a dandy blow!"

"The Dutchman ought to go into the prize ring. He would make his fortune at it."

"He has finished his first man. Now let the second come on, if he dares."

So the cries continued; for there is nothing that so delights the heart of a sailor or a soldier as a "scrap," either on land or at sea. Among sailors especially, boxing is a constant pastime; and the "best man" is always considered something of a leader.

The crowd looked to Nuggy Polk to continue the fight; but that young man had no desire to do so, for he could plainly see that his chum had suffered heavy punishment.

"You have killed him!" he said in a shaking voice. "Somebody run for a doctor."

"Oh, he'll come around all right," put in one of the sailors. "Carl rapped him a bit hard, that's all. So you ain't up against it, are you?" he added dryly.

"He's afraid," came from a voice in the rear of the crowd. "He's one of the sports that fights with his mouth only."

At this instant the crowd was compelled to part, as the lieutenant-colonel of the regiment pushed his way to the front. His quick eye turned from Nickerson to Carl, and he faced the German soldier sternly.

"What's the meaning of this?" he demanded.

"He called me a Dutch idiot, und he vos hit me here," answered Carl, as he saluted, and then pointed to his breast.

"It's not so," interposed Nuggy. "He started a quarrel, and he has nearly killed my friend."

"He vos hit me first," insisted Carl.

"It's false. He knocked Mr. Nickerson down before he said a word."

"I vos slip on der steps, und I rolled into him," explained Carl. "Den he calls me names, und hits me so hard as he can. Of he vos act like a chentle-

mans, I vos abologise for rollin' into him. But he calls me an idiot und a klown, und I vos no stand dot from anypody." And the German soldier shook his head determinedly.

"That's the truth of it," came from a corporal standing near. "I saw and overheard the whole transaction, colonel."

By this time Jerry was coming to his senses. He blinked his eyes, and, sitting up, stared around him.

"Keep off!" he muttered. "Don't hit me again!"

"You're all right now," said the lieutenant-colonel. "I am sorry to see you having a row with one of our men, though."

"He started the row," answered Nickerson, bound to save himself from trouble, if possible.

"It isn't so," came from several in the crowd. "He struck the first blow, just as Stummer says."

"But he knocked me down first, and he did it on purpose."

"Dot ain't so. I vos coming der stairs town, ven I slip, because der poat vos so unsteady," explained Carl; and then he went into the details of the encounter from start to finish. Several times Jerry

Nickerson tried to interrupt him, but the lieutenant-colonel would not allow it. Carl's story was corroborated by several others besides the corporal who had first spoken up.

"It seems you are to blame," said the lieutenant-colonel, after listening to Nickerson's lame recital. "In the future I think you had better leave our soldiers alone. And now I want this crowd to disperse," he concluded, with a wave of his hand.

The soldiers sauntered off, alone and in pairs; and Carl went with them. Nickerson said nothing more, but his black looks bode the German regular no good.

"He'll down ye if he can," said Dan Casey to Carl, on hearing of the affair. "Ye want to be afther watchin' him as a hen turkey watches a hawk."

"I vos keep mine eye skvare on him," answered Carl.

But this was hardly necessary, at least for the next few days; for, as the storm increased, both Nickerson and Nuggy Polk became violently seasick, and had to keep to their state-room, both moaning and groaning in a fashion that was truly pitiable. Nickerson laid his sickness to the violent handling

received from Stummer, but Nuggy had no such excuse.

The sight that greeted our soldiers when the transport dropped anchor off Taku was truly an inspiring one. At Nagasaki they had seen many vessels of various nationalities; but never before had they witnessed such a collection of noble-looking warships, each cleared for action and each flying the flag of the nation to which it belonged as well as its own naval ensign. Here were armored cruisers, battleships, ironclads, torpedo boats, and despatch steamers innumerable; while still closer to the various landings lay transports, coal, and supply vessels, all busy loading or unloading, and many teeming with soldiers.

"What a collection!" said Gilbert, as he and Captain Banner surveyed the scene through a field-glass. "Just look at those Japanese soldiers. I don't believe one of them is over five feet six inches in height."

"No, but I understand they make good fighters," answered the captain. "The Frenchmen, unloading next to them, are not much larger."

"There are some soldiers we have never seen before," put in Major Morris, who was also at the rail.

"They are Sikhs from India, and belong to the British contingent. How strong and sturdy they look!"

"There go a lot of camels," went on Gilbert. "I suppose the East Indians use those instead of horses."

"Yes; and the Russians use them, too," answered the major. "Yonder, back of the dock, is a long string of oxen with carts. I guess anything goes here, in the way of transportation. The main thing is to get there, and as soon as possible."

The transport was heading slowly for land, and, as the ship drew closer, those on board could make out the outer forts of Taku,—those forts which had been captured at the beginning of the trouble with China. Gilbert had expected to see modern enclosures of heavy stone. He was much disappointed to behold nothing but long, low-lying banks of earth, with here and there an opening, the banks lying on either side of the sluggish Pei-Ho, which looked as muddy and uninviting as any stream he had ever seen. On all the sun blazed down with the fury of a fiery furnace.

Suddenly Gilbert felt his arm grasped by Captain Banner. "No picnic this, lieutenant," came in a low

voice. "We're going to be thrown in among all sorts; and we've got to take what comes, and say nothing."

"What gets me is, how is an international army to be commanded, when we can't understand some of the foreigners' talk and they can't understand ours?"

"That's a problem for our superiors to solve. At the start, I guess each nationality will have to move on its own hook. We are here to rescue the Americans who are in danger in Peking and elsewhere, and that is what we must fight for until further orders from headquarters."

It was not until early the next morning that Gilbert's company went ashore, at Tongku, the majority of the regiment landing at Taku. Some supplies were arriving from Shanghai; and part of these were placed in care of Captain Banner's command, while the rest went on board of the *Monocacy*, then lying at the Tongku dock.

"She's an old boat," said Captain Banner, referring to the *Monocacy*. "Her guns date back to 1865, and I understand that she has been laid up in Chinese waters for over fifteen years. Dewey wouldn't take her to Manila when he sailed to wipe

out the Spanish fleet. But one of her men told me that she makes a first-class hospital and relief ship."

There was not much to do, excepting to watch where the supplies were placed and to keep tab on them, so that some Italian soldiers in the vicinity would not walk away with the things; and Gilbert took it easy under a big shed built of logs and split bamboo. Presently, much to his astonishment, a Chinaman appeared, wearing the uniform of a British soldier.

"Please you slay where him Cap'n Wilbur land," said the Chinaman, after saluting in true military fashion.

"What's that?" asked Gilbert, who found it hard to understand the Celestial.

"Me lookee for him, Cap'n Wilbur,—Englees officer. You know where him land?"

"The English are landing something down the stream a bit. You may find him there."

"Thlankee, lieutenant." And the Chinaman saluted again.

"Hold on!" cried Gilbert, curiously. "Are you a British soldier?"

"Yees, lieutenant. Me 'list at Wei-Hai-Wei. Many Chinamen 'list lare. Me Chlistian solyer."

"And you are ready to fight your own country-men?"

"Certe, lieutenant. Da no Chlistians — me Chlistian — me fight alle samee, rescue Chlistians at legations in Pekin." And with a merry nod the Chinaman bobbed away. Gilbert could not help but gaze at him in wonder.

"I don't believe he'll fight his own people, Christian or no Christian," he mused. But for once the young lieutenant was mistaken. When it came to the test, the Chinese troops marching under the Union Jack fought as well as any Celestials in the war.

When leaving the transport, Gilbert had lost sight of Nuggy Polk and Jerry Nickerson; and he felt that it might be many a day before he would again encounter the pair.

"Perhaps we shall never meet again," he thought. "I've got a hard campaign before me; and who knows but that I may lay down my life in the struggle? Somebody is bound to die, and this trip it may be my turn."

From the soldiers who were coming and going Gilbert learned that fighting in and around Tien-Tsin was of daily occurrence. "The Chinks are not beaten yet," said one old marine. "We hold Taku, Tongku, a part of Tien-Tsin, and about fifteen miles of this Tongku-Pekin railway; and that is all we do hold."

"Is the railroad to Peking in order still?"

"Bless you! no, lieutenant. The Boxers tore up the rails long ago, and threw them into the river. And, worse than that, I've been told that they have cut up the roads, too, so that, if we march on Peking, we'll do lots of travelling through ditches filled with water and mud."

CHAPTER XIV

A FIRST BATTLE ON CHINESE SOIL

THE distance from the Gulf of Pechili to Tien-Tsin by the Pei-Ho is all of seventy miles; for the river, broad and very shallow except during the annual high tides, winds its way along in serpent fashion through marshland and reeds, with here and there an embankment thrown up to resist the encroachments of the sea. Fortunately, the bottom of the river is nothing more dangerous than slimy mud, so that steamers getting stuck suffer little or nothing save the time and expense of getting afloat again.

The native city and the foreign concessions lie on the southern bank of the Pei-Ho; while opposite are the railroad station, docks, and, just east of these, the arsenal. The distance from here to Tongku by railroad, a direct line, is but twenty-seven miles, with but one station of importance between, Chung-Liang-Cheng. To the west of the native quarter is the Grand Canal, on the opposite bank of which are

located the cathedral and the private grounds and palace of the viceroy of Shantung, Earl Li Hung Chang.

The native city of Tien-Tsin is surrounded by a high stone wall; and there is another wall still further out, around all of the settlements. The latter was erected during the war of 1860, when China was fighting the French and English. The wall would have made an excellent defence; but it was never manned, the Chinese soldiers contenting themselves with shooting off a vast amount of fire-crackers, in order to scare the enemy, and then running for their lives.

Tien-Tsin, new and old, covers a good many miles of territory; for, while the houses and huts of brick, mud, wood, and bamboo are often huddled close together, yet there are numerous wide market-places and low spots often covered with water during a heavy rain. The streets are narrow, crooked, and dirty to the last degree. Paving, as we know it, is unknown, and so are sewers; and the consequence is that each street, or rather lane, soon becomes something of an open ditch, breeding disease and death.

What struck Gilbert as peculiar on his first trip beyond Tongku were the numerous mounds which greeted his eyes, rearing their heads like so many ant-hills at every turn. He soon learned, however, that these were the well-known graves of China, scattered broadcast. In some cases these graves are deeply dug; but in others the dead are placed along the roadside, and covered only with a handful of earth or a bit of coarse matting.

The young lieutenant's duties at Tongku kept him close to the river front; and from time to time he saw floating on the stream the lifeless bodies of Chinese soldiers and Boxers, the latter easily to be identified by the curious symbols on their breasts, painted on their garments as a guard against all evils! Once he saw three Celestials floating together, each in the death-grip of the others; and the sight made him shudder more than anything he had witnessed in the Philippines.

"Poor fellows! it's a good deal of a pity to fight them," he murmured. "They really don't know what they are doing. I suppose, in their way, they imagine they are quite in the right." Then he drew a long breath, and the soldier spirit came back to him.

“But they have got to leave the missionaries and our representatives alone, and that is all there is to it.”

The *Brooklyn* and the *Oregon*, the two warships which had given such good accounts of themselves at the battle of Santiago Harbor, had not yet arrived at Taku, but were expected at any hour. The *Oregon* had met with a slight mishap, and was in consequence undergoing some temporary repairs. General Chaffee was also expected very soon, with his troops from San Francisco.

It was on Independence Day that Gilbert found himself on the firing line for the first time. The Allies were trying to keep open the line of communication along the railroad to Tien-Tsin; but twelve miles from Tongku the rails were completely gone, the road-bed crossed by newly-made ditches, and the Boxers were on the constant lookout, hoping to entrap any “foreign devils” who might show themselves. In the mean time Tien-Tsin was being furiously bombarded by Boxers and Shantung government troops combined, who had brought to the scene a number of powerful Krupp siege guns.

“Lieutenant, we are ordered out up the railroad,” said Captain Banner early on the morning of the

Fourth of July. "The whole battalion is going, and Major Morris agrees with me that we are likely to celebrate the day by firing a good many shots."

"All right, captain. I am ready any time the major sets," answered Gilbert, with a grim smile. "I came to China to fight; and I believe fighting is a good bit like swimming,—the sooner you get into trim for it and plunge in, the better off you are. It won't do for a swimmer to stand on the bank and shiver, as he looks at the cold water; and it won't do for a soldier to get the 'yellow shakes,' as our Western boys term it, listening to the guns from a distance."

At this homely view of things, Captain Banner laughed. "I don't believe you will get the shakes," he said. "You have been through the mill too often."

"But I may get them, nevertheless. I have heard tell that the best of officers get shaky at times. There is no such thing as utter nervelessness, if you'll allow me to coin the word."

Orders were soon going the rounds; and, after a hasty breakfast, blanket rolls were packed, guns inspected, and additional ammunition passed around. In an hour more the battalion was on the march,

those left behind wishing the members of the four companies the best of luck.

“Don’t stop until you have gone straight through to Pekin!” cried one of the men left behind. “Show the foreigners what Yankee blood and pluck can do!” And a cheer went up, which lasted until the battalion had left Tongku behind.

The weather was warm and muggy; and, had some of the soldiers had their way, blanket rolls would have been pitched aside, to be picked up by the cart train following. But this was not allowed, for there was no telling where the battalion would rest during the coming night or if the train would get through in safety.

“I have often wondered if the folks at home fully realize the life a soldier leads,” remarked Captain Banner, as he walked along near Gilbert. “They hear of victories or defeats, and read the death lists and all that; but do they realize the knocking around a soldier does,—how he has to tramp miles and miles, be it hot or cold, dry or wet, with a heavy gun and a heavier load, eating when he can and whatever he manages to get, and sleeping very often in the open air and occasionally in a soaking rain?”

"I don't believe folks do realize it," answered Gilbert. "If they did, so many of them wouldn't be for talking of the glories of a soldier's life and the pride of conquest. Of course there is lots of excitement, when a real campaign is on; but such waits as we had in the Philippines, especially during the wet seasons, are awful."

"Everything depends upon what you get used to," put in Major Morris, who was near. "Now look at Captain Cannon, for example. He has been in both the army and the navy, and he virtually knows nothing else. He would rather fight than eat, and nothing would suit him better than for the United States to start out on a world-conquering tour. He told me yesterday that he hoped we should keep on fighting in China for at least a year."

"A year!" cried Gilbert. "Well, I don't agree with him. I trust we have only one or two good battles, and that the Chinese then come to terms. I am afraid it would make me sick to fight the pig-tails for a whole year. I was heartily tired of fighting the Filipinos when I left Manila."

By noon the battalion had gone along the railroad line for a considerable distance, and from ahead came

the booming of a cannon in the direction of Chung-Liang-Cheng. There was a wide paddy field to cross; and beyond was a small wood, flanked on the right by a mud embankment and a ditch.

"Some Russian troops ahead," announced Major Morris, after surveying the situation with his field-glasses. He turned to Gilbert. "Lieutenant Pennington, take two men with you over to yonder embankment, and find out what is going on."

"I will do so, Major Morris," answered the young lieutenant, and saluted. The major next issued a command for the battalion to halt, and the four companies came to a rest at the edge of the rice field.

Gilbert knew that he could trust no men more than Stummer and Casey, and soon had them at his side. The trio hurried across the field, but with caution, and soon entered the wood previously mentioned. From a distance the cracking of rifles continued, but the sounds showed that both the enemy and the Russians were shifting their positions.

"We'll be nixt to it very soon now," muttered Dan Casey, as he clutched his gun in such a manner that he might use it at the slightest warning. "It

sames to me I'm afther hearing thim Chinks yell already."

"I dink dem vos Roossins you vos hear," answered Stummer. "Da vos firin' by — Here da come now!"

There was a rushing of many feet and a yelling in a tongue that was foreign to Gilbert, and the next instant a body of Cossacks burst into view. Whether they were making a flank movement or retreating, the young lieutenant could not tell. As they swept along, a captain of the command saw the three, and ran toward them.

"Who are you? Where come you from?" he asked in the Russian tongue, and then, noting the uniforms, added, "Americans?"

"Yes," answered Gilbert. "Do you speak English?"

The Russian captain shook his head. "Do you speak Russian?" he asked in his own tongue.

It was now Gilbert's turn to shake his head. This made him smile, and the Russian seemed also to enjoy the grim humor of the situation.

"If we can't understand each other, we're stuck," muttered the young lieutenant. Then a sudden

thought struck him, and he turned to Stummer. "Carl, try him in German."

Saluting, Stummer did so; and at this the Russian looked relieved. He could speak sufficient German to make himself understood; and, through the private, Gilbert learned that the Russian body at the wood numbered about three hundred. Over two thousand Boxers were in front of the Russians, and the latter were on their way to use the embankment as a cover.

"We have over four hundred men," answered Gilbert, through Carl. "I will inform my superior of the state of affairs, and he will most likely come to your aid. Will you hold the embankment if we skirt the wood and come up on the other side?"

"We will," answered the Russian.

By this time the foreign officer had to move along with the last of his command,—fierce-looking fellows, whose uniforms were covered with dust, dirt, and blood. The young lieutenant lost no time in returning to Major Morris and reporting.

"We will skirt the wood, as you intimated to the Russian captain," said the major, promptly. "Battalion, attention! Forward march! Double quick!" And away went the command, Company A leading,

with Captain Banner and Gilbert at either end of the long line.

It must be confessed that Gilbert's heart beat quickly, for the Chinese could be seen at a distance, shouting and screaming and waving innumerable banners; for to the Celestials banners seem almost as necessary as guns. Then came a sudden cracking of rifles, and a volley of bullets passed over the Americans' heads.

"Take aim! Fire!" came the order; and the long line of rifles flashed forth and many a Boxer was seen to topple over, to rise no more. Each regular was a trained marksman, and shot to kill. Then the Americans swept on, and in a few seconds more Gilbert was in the very midst of his first battle on Chinese soil.

CHAPTER XV

FIGHTING ALONG THE PEI-HO

“GIVE it to 'em hot-like, boys! Show 'em what American regulars can do!”

“Make every round tell. We haven't any ammunition to waste.”

“The colonel expects us to give a good account of ourselves. Don't disappoint him.”

So the cries ran on, while the regulars were advancing. But, as they drew closer to the enemy, a strange silence fell; for all realized that what was before them was no child's play.

The Boxers facing the American troops numbered at least a thousand, the others having pursued the Russians at the embankment. They were well armed; and a second volley from their first rank brought down two of the Americans, both seriously wounded. The Celestials were making a tremendous din, and the combined noise was deafening, while the wild waving of banners was well calculated to destroy a marksman's aim.



THE YELLOW MAN WAS ON THE POINT OF BLAZING AWAY AT
GILBERT'S EAR.—Page 145.

But the command was again to go forward, coupled with the order to fire at will; and soon Gilbert found himself almost face to face with a crowd of Celestials. He fired his pistol, and saw his man tumble backward; and then, as if by magic, four or five of the Boxers hurled themselves at him.

The fury of that onslaught cannot be described. The young lieutenant had been in several hand-to-hand encounters in Luzon; but no attack by Filipinos could equal this frenzied rush by fanatics, who thought by annihilating the "foreign devils" they would gain for themselves a superior place in the Hereafter.

"*Cheri-chi-chi!*" was the battle-cry, as it sounded in Gilbert's ears. "Kill! kill! kill!" was the word the Boxers used the most, repeated in several dialects.

Gilbert felt that he must fight as he had never fought before. His sword was in one hand and his pistol in the other. Crack! crack! went the smaller weapon; and then the larger was thrust forward, to find the shoulder of a Celestial beside him. The yellow man, his eyes almost staring from his head with excitement, was on the point of blaz-

ing away at Gilbert's ear with his gun, when a bullet from the rear rank of the Americans killed him on the spot. Then the young lieutenant leaped over a dead body before him, hurling a little Asiatic flat, and reached a breathing-spot, where he might catch his second wind.

The Boxers had been carefully trained in their peculiar military tactics; but the average Chinaman loses his head easily, and soon the officers of the Celestials could no longer control them. Some continued to advance, while the majority retreated, and the din became even greater than before.

"Form a square!" was the command from Major Morris, as soon as he realized that the Boxers were bewildered and running around on all sides. The order was quickly obeyed, and then each of the four companies composing the sides of the hollow square was ordered to advance. They fired as rapidly as their guns permitted, and in less than ten minutes the Celestials were all in retreat.

In the mean time another pitched battle had been going on at the embankment, and here honors were about equally divided between the Chinese and the Russians. The latter had been fighting hard the day

before; and the heat had all but exhausted them, for each man was heavily equipped.

As one division of the Celestials was fleeing from the Americans, they, or at least a larger portion of them, plumped straight into the others near the embankment, utterly demoralizing them. "The Americans are coming! They number thousands!" was the cry, in Chinese; and then began a retreat such as Gilbert had never before seen, the Boxers tumbling over each other in their haste, tearing their flowing uniforms, throwing down guns and swords, and all the while waving their beloved banners and shrieking as if to arouse the dead.

The Russians saw the turn of affairs, and were quick to take advantage of the move. In a twinkling they leaped over the embankment, and poured a hot fire into the retreating enemy. Soon they were beside the Americans, and then they did all in their power to outstrip them. The only time a Russian soldier would pause was when he saw some wounded Chinaman trying to escape, when the wretched fellow would immediately be despatched with a bayonet.

"That's too much for me," cried Gilbert, as he watched one of these performances. "Those poor

fellows are out of the fight. Why not leave them alone?"

"I'm afraid you'll see worse than that before we get through," answered Captain Banner. "Some foreign soldiers are pretty brutal, I can tell you that; and even some of our own men can't be held back at times."

There was no time to say more, for all were after the Boxers on the double-quick. Gradually the Celestials separated into three parties. At this the Russians followed one, the Americans another, while the third party escaped in the direction of Shan-Hai-Kwan, a town to the north of Tongku.

In the struggle near the wood the Americans had left the vicinity of the railroad; but now the Boxers they were after ran for the road-bed and came out at a spot between that and the Pei-Ho. They appeared to know the marshland perfectly, and soon the larger portion of them disappeared among the tall reeds.

Gilbert's company ran as far as possible into the marshland, and were then ordered to halt by Captain Banner. Soon after this Major Morris ordered the entire battalion back to the road-bed of the railroad, and fighting for the time being came to an end.

The respite was a welcome for the men, for the hot sun had caused them great suffering. A hasty meal was had, and a constant watch was kept for the Boxers; but they did not reappear, and just before nightfall the battalion pushed on once more in the direction of Tien-Tsin.

"Phew! but that was hot while it lasted!" exclaimed Gilbert, as he sank on a hillock to rest. "We pitched right in from the word go!"

"So we did," answered Captain Banner. "I wonder what became of that Russian detachment?"

"They are on the other side of the tracks somewhere. Hark! You can hear the firing. But what is that booming to the south?"

"That's a storm," put in another officer. "We are going to catch it heavily, mark my words."

The officer was right. A quarter of an hour later the first drops began to fall, and in less than an hour the downpour became a perfect deluge. Close beside the railroad some of the soldiers had found a quantity of driftwood, and of this they proceeded to make shelters to keep off the water.

It looked as if the battalion was in for a bad night of it, but how bad no one yet knew. Darkness had

scarcely settled down when a staff officer dashed up on a horse covered with foam.

"Is that Major Morris's command?" came to the picket from out of the gloom and the rain.

"Yes."

"Tell him I have a message from the colonel."

Word was passed, and the major went out to meet the messenger.

"You must proceed to Tien-Tsin without delay, Major Morris," said the staff officer. "The foreign section is suffering an extra heavy bombardment. A force of Japanese and French will soon be along this way, and orders are for you to attach yourself to that body."

"I will do all I can, Captain Drake," answered the major. And, knowing the staff officer well, he continued, "What does this mean, anyway?"

"It means that the Old Harry is to pay at Tien-Tsin. All told, the Allies have but twelve thousand men there; while the attacking force is said to number twenty to thirty thousand, and is being constantly increased. The Chinese regulars have joined the Boxers."

"And how many men have we on the road?"

"The Allies had four thousand; but some extra Japanese and German troops have just arrived, and they are to be pushed forward to-night, if possible. But I must be going. If I am not mistaken, here come the Japanese and French I mentioned now."

A steady tramping through the rain and darkness could be heard, and soon came a cry from the picket line. The major rode forward to investigate in person, and soon found himself confronted by a Japanese officer of a rank equal to his own. The Japanese officer was uniformed most gorgeously, and rode a black steed that the major easily saw was a thoroughbred.

"Yes, we shall march straight to Tien-Tsin," said the Japanese, in excellent English. "I was told of your command, and shall be pleased to have your company. I shall keep to the right of the railroad so long as the enemy remains under cover. The French are going to keep to the left."

"Then we will continue close to the river," answered Major Morris; and, saluting, he rode off. Necessary orders were at once issued; and again Gilbert found himself on the march.

The forward movement continued until long after

midnight, when, too tired out to go another step, the battalion was stopped by the commander. The French detachment, consisting of six hundred men, likewise halted. But the Japanese would not stop, and went off with their steady, tripping step, in a manner to astonish everybody.

"By Jove, I believe they could march for a week without stopping," was Captain Banner's comment. "They seem to be all bone and muscle."

"And they live on little but rice, too," added Gilbert. "It certainly is wonderful what they can endure."

The Frenchmen were glad enough to have the Americans at hand, and the two camps were pitched side by side. The foreigners were from the south of France, and were mostly the sons of farmers or grape-growers.

"We are bound to meet all kinds of people here," said Gilbert. He was much interested in the Frenchmen, and was sorry he could not converse with them. Here and there a conversation was held, but it was soon discovered that the supply of French on one side and of English on the other was decidedly limited.

Gilbert had become accustomed to sleeping on the battlefield; and, seeking the most sheltered spot he could find, he was soon in the land of dreams. He slept until daybreak, and was just turning over for another nap when one of the sergeants aroused him.

“Up quick, lieutenant!” was the cry. “The Chinese are coming along the river. We are in for another scrap, sure, and a big one!”

CHAPTER XVI

ENTERING TIEN-TSIN UNDER DIFFICULTIES

It did not take Gilbert long to rouse up and reach for his weapons. His pistol and sword secured, he ran to where his company was already forming, under the directions of Second Lieutenant Bruff. A shooting in the direction of the Pei-Ho told him that hostilities had already started.

"The Chinese are moving in the direction of Tien-Tsin," announced Major Morris. "We must follow them up. The French detachment will support us."

But little more was said, and five minutes later the battalion of American regulars were moving along silently. It was still raining, but it could be seen that the storm was coming to an end.

Presently there came a loud shouting out of the darkness, followed by more shots.

"Don't let them get into the boat! For the love of heaven, push her from shore!"

"Some Americans or English in a boat, and in

trouble!" cried Captain Banner, and gazed at the major inquiringly.

"Company A will march directly to the river shore," said Major Morris, promptly. "If those people in the boat need assistance, give them all you can."

The rain had soaked the marshland thoroughly, and soon the members of Company A found themselves in water over their ankles. The shouting from the river continued; and at length they made out a small lighter, usually used to transport goods from the steamboats in Taku Harbor to Tien-Tsin. The lighter was filled with refugees from Tien-Tsin, — men, women, and children, — who were trying to escape the furies of the Chinese bombardment. The craft had become stuck in the mud, and was being fired upon by a party of Boxers, numbering at least two hundred and fifty.

As soon as he realized the situation, Captain Banner did not hesitate as to what to do. Bringing his company to a halt, he ordered the men to fire low, so as not to hit anybody in the boat.

The first round was very effective, six Boxers being killed and as many more wounded. The at-

tack came largely as a surprise, for the Celestials had been so intent upon killing those in the boat that they had paid no attention to what might come behind them. At once yells and shrieks arose; and, when Company A poured in a second and a third round, the Boxers scattered, some running up the shore, and the others down. They fired only a handful of shots, and these did little damage.

By this time both the American and French soldiers were ranging along the Pei-Ho, and the scattering of the Boxers brought on their doom. One detachment fell into the hands of the Frenchmen, and were killed almost to a man; while the other—by far the larger detachment—ran into the arms of the other companies of Major Morris's battalion. A fierce rough-and-tumble fight ensued, the most of it on the American side falling to Company C; and then the Boxers leaped into the stream to swim for the other shore. At least twenty were laid low on land, and as many more killed or wounded in the water.

It was soon learned that the lighter had started from Tien-Tsin on the evening of the day before, in the midst of the heavy downpour of rain. It carried

twenty-eight people, mostly English and German, although there was one American and his wife and little girl.

"The bombardment at Tien-Tsin is something awful," said the American, whose name was Margoss. "At first the Chinese couldn't get our range; but now they have it, and they pour shot and shell into almost any place they select. My partner in business, Mr. Mackley, was sitting on the front porch of his residence when a shot struck the top of the porch, killing him instantly. Most of the stores are in ruins, and the people have all they can do to keep the fires that start from spreading."

"What are our soldiers doing?"

"I know nothing of any but the marines under Captain McCalla, and they can do but little outside of holding their own. Some of the sharpshooters are out every day, picking off every pig-tail who shows himself. But that is only a drop in the bucket; for the government troops of China have united with the Boxers, and combined they number thousands to our hundreds. If the Chinks could fight as the foreign troops fight, we should be wiped out in no time."

"The barbarities are something dreadful," put in Mrs. Margoss. "The Chinese are very brutal, literally hacking women and children to death; and this has so angered some of the Japanese and Russians that they can't be held in check, and consequently they are taking no prisoners, but putting all the enemy to the sword or bayonet. In some cases women and children are treated like the men, for the Japanese and Russians say they are not to be trusted."

This version of affairs was corroborated by all the others in the boat. The refugees were very bitter, for many of them had lost everything but the clothes on their backs. Two in the craft had been wounded, and two had leaped overboard and disappeared.

A consultation was held; and it was decided that the lighter should be used to ferry the American and French soldiers over the river, that they might have more of a chance to get into Tien-Tsin. On a pinch the craft could carry several hundred men, so it did not take long to complete the movement. This done, the lighter was again turned over to the refugees. With the latter went all the Americans and French who had been wounded, under an escort of eight

Frenchmen,—clever shots, who could do a good deal in the way of protection if the lighter got into another tight corner.

By the time the battalion was ready to continue its march toward Tien-Tsin it was broad daylight. As the soldiers came closer to the foreign quarter of the city, they kept closer together; and a vidette was sent ahead, that they might not fall into a trap.

The evidences of a bombardment were now to be seen on every hand. The Pei-Ho was full of the dead bodies of Boxers, some washed up on the shore by the tide and others floating aimlessly hither and thither. Here and there a savage "chow" (Chinese wolf dog) was feeding on the corpses. Where the road was not torn up, it was strewn with household effects, soldier equipments, and the like. At one point there was a hasty breastworks built of a pile of salt.

Suddenly, just as Tien-Tsin was sighted, there came a number of shots from across the river, and one of the French soldiers was struck in the arm. A body of Chinese troops had sighted the oncoming troops, and in a few minutes a small field-gun was trained upon them.

"Double quick!" came the order from Major Morris; for he realized that they could do nothing against an enemy who lay across the stream and who had a piece of artillery at his command.

The order was obeyed as quickly as given. The Frenchmen were in the lead; and they soon reached the wall of the foreign quarter, where of a sudden they received a cheer from their own countrymen, who were guarding the outer defences in that vicinity.

"Right wheel!" came the order for the American battalion; and they moved off in the direction of a row of huts, but still keeping close to the wall. They were still some distance from one of the arsenals, when a volley from an embankment to their left made them stop.

That the entire foreign quarter of Tien-Tsin was suffering a heavy bombardment there could be no doubt; for the booming of cannon was continuous, and from a distance came that whining of shells which, when once heard, is never forgotten.

"Hurrah! I see an American flag!" cried Gilbert, after looking through a pair of field-glasses.

"Hurrah for Old Glory!" was the cry. "See, there is an opening for us, at yonder gate!"

Major Morris had already seen the opening, and the battalion was immediately urged onward once more. Once some Chinese troops showed themselves in the long grass to the westward, and the four companies of Americans opened fire on them. Then the embankment was gained, and the troops slipped through the gate mentioned, just as a Chinese field-gun sent a twelve-pound shot after them. The shot took off the top of a near-by flagstaff, but otherwise did no damage.

Once inside of the outer wall of Tien-Tsin, the battalion felt fairly safe for the time being. Still, they were but a short distance from the Chinese quarter; and it was soon learned that the Celestials had from ten to twenty thousand troops on hand, with many more pouring into the neighborhood every day. What the outcome of the fighting at Tien-Tsin would be, no one cared to predict. It was felt that the Allies needed re-enforcements very much.

“What a mixture of troops!” such was Gilbert’s comment when first he saw the camp of the Allies. English, French, German, Italian, Russian, and Japanese were represented; and of these troops there were numerous branches, such as the Chinese-Eng-

lish, the East Indian English, and the Japanese-German and Chinese-French. It was a conglomeration as startling as it was interesting. Some few of the troops were on ponies and horses, but the majority were afoot. All were armed in the latest fashion, however; and the general appearance presented was formidable.

"China must think it has the world against it," observed Gilbert, after the company had come to a halt and Major Morris had gone off to report to his superior.

"And so it has," answered Captain Banner. "Civilization is going to move on; and China must move, too, or take the consequences."

The battalion was too tired out to do anything but rest; and a cool, shady spot was found for it not far from the English legation, for it was but natural that the Americans and the English should stick together, speaking the same language. Gilbert was glad enough to throw himself down, and was soon half asleep.

"They tell me the Chinese have four mounted guns in the native quarter," remarked Captain Banner, on returning from a short walk.

"But we have heard more than four cannon," said Gilbert.

"Oh, they have others, on the outside. They are directing a good part of their fire over to the railroad station, and an English officer just told me that the round-house is in ruins."

"What are we to do?"

"Nothing for the present. I suppose they will put us on the outer defences to-morrow."

"Then we'll see some more real fighting very soon."

"We shall."

CHAPTER XVII

GILBERT MEETS AMOS BARTLETT

DESPITE the fighting which he had done during the past few days, Gilbert had not forgotten about Mr. Amos Bartlett; and as soon as he found time he started out to learn, if possible, what had become of the tea-merchant.

It was with difficulty that he found the street upon which was located Amos Bartlett's house and likewise the place where the merchant did business. It was usually a busy quarter, but now it was all but deserted.

The streets were filled with rubbish and filth, and household effects were scattered everywhere. More than one house or store showed signs of the bombardment, in the way of great holes or falling walls; and at certain points the very roadway was ploughed up.

At last the young lieutenant stood before Amos Bartlett's warehouse, a low, rambling affair of wood.

It seemed to be locked up; and he was about to go on to the house beyond, when a cry in an English voice arrested him.

“Let those goods alone! They belong to me, and you shall not touch them!”

The voice was high-pitched and trembling, as if that of an elderly man, and appeared to come from the rear of the warehouse. Curious to know what was going on, Gilbert hurried to the rear, and here found an elderly American gentleman and three Russian soldiers. The Russian soldiers were trying to walk off with a big box of tea, and the elderly man was endeavoring to stop them. The foreigners were talking in their native tongue, and of course Gilbert could not understand a word of what was said.

“What’s the trouble?” asked the young lieutenant. The brutal looks on the faces of the three Russians did not please him.

“They wish to rob me of my tea, and I refuse to let them have it,” answered the elderly gentleman; and then, glancing at Gilbert’s uniform, he added, “Are you an American officer?”

“I am.”

"Then let me tell you that I am an American citizen. These are my own private goods, and I place myself under your protection."

Gilbert was startled, and naturally; for he immediately felt the delicacy of his position. Yet it was not in him to shirk his duty; and, facing the three Russians, he ordered them to drop the box they had picked up.

At once all three began to talk at a rapid rate, every word being utterly unintelligible to the young lieutenant. All he could do was to point to the box with his sword and then point to the floor. But the Russians either did not or would not understand, and they started for the door with their burden.

But Gilbert was not to be circumvented; and, rushing to the doorway, he placed himself in the very centre of it, holding his sword straight in front of him.

"Can you speak Russian?" he asked of the elderly man.

"Just a little."

"Then tell them that you have placed the goods in care of the American soldiers."

As well as he was able, the elderly man did as

requested. At once the Russians began to answer, speaking as rapidly as before.

"They say they have orders from one of their officers to take the tea," said the elderly man. "But I don't believe them. Some of those Russians have stolen my tea before this. They are all great drinkers of tea, you know."

"Tell them they must produce a written order for tea, properly signed," went on Gilbert. "Then, if they take it, you can charge it up to the Russian government."

When Gilbert's words were translated the three Russians scowled. As a matter of fact, they had not been sent out at all, but were on a private looting expedition, and had expected to obtain a rich prize in the chest of tea, which weighed at least a hundred pounds. One of the number looked as if he wished to fight the young lieutenant, but the determined look in Gilbert's eyes held him in check.

"Be it so. We will get an order," said the ring-leader, in Russian; and he sullenly withdrew, followed by his comrades. Once outside, they lost no time in hurrying for the Russian camp, fearful of being followed and reported.

"That is the sixth time they have attempted to loot this warehouse," said the elderly man, drawing a long sigh of relief on finding the intruders gone. "If I didn't keep watch day and night, I shouldn't have a cash's worth of goods left."

"I am glad I was of service to you," answered Gilbert; and then he added curiously, "Can this be Mr. Amos Bartlett?"

"That is my name, lieutenant. But you have the advantage of me." And Amos Bartlett looked at Gilbert carefully.

"We have never met, Mr. Bartlett; but I have often heard of you, and you knew my father and my mother quite well. My name is Gilbert Pennington, and my father was Jefferson Pennington."

"Jefferson Pennington's son! Is it possible?" The elderly gentleman held out his hand. "I am more than delighted to meet you." And he wrung Gilbert's hand warmly. The heartiness of the grasp was one Gilbert never forgot; and, as he looked into Amos Bartlett's eyes, he realized that he had met one who could be trusted and who would be his friend.

"Perhaps you will think it queer, but I have been thinking of you a good deal lately," said the young

lieutenant. "And it was partly to try to find you that I was anxious for this campaign in China."

"Yes? You excite my curiosity. But come into my house, and I will introduce you to my wife and daughter. I wished to send them to Taku for safety, but neither would leave me."

Trembling with excitement over what had just occurred, Amos Bartlett led the way out of the warehouse, the door of which he bolted and locked, and then took Gilbert to the house next door, a comfortable residence, built in the form of a hollow square, and two stories high. In the centre was a tastefully laid out garden; and here, resting in hammocks, were Mrs. Bartlett, a lady nearly as old as her husband, and Jennie, her daughter, a girl of fifteen.

Mrs. Bartlett had known the late Mrs. Pennington well, and was greatly pleased to meet Gilbert; and the daughter was also interested. They soon made the young lieutenant feel at home, and the lady of the house had a faithful Chinese servant prepare some refreshments.

"Of course we are all upset," said Mrs. Bartlett; "for we do not know what minute the Chinese may

turn their guns in this direction again. I want my husband to go to Taku with us, but he insists upon remaining here and guarding his property to the last; and I cannot bear to think of separating from him, for we have been together ever since we came to China."

"You spoke about coming particularly to see me," put in Amos Bartlett.

"I did wish to see you very much, Mr. Bartlett," answered Gilbert. "But, before I go further, let me ask, has Mr. Ramsey Polk's son Nuggy called upon you yet?"

"Ramsey Polk's son?" repeated the tea-merchant. "Why, no. I did not know that he was in China."

"He came over from Manila with our regiment, although he is not a soldier."

"I have seen or heard nothing of him. I remember him as a boy, but that is all."

"He is on his way here to buy out your interest in the Richmond Importing Company."

"Indeed! I was informed by letter that the Importing Company's affairs were in bad shape." And Amos Bartlett smiled in a peculiar way.

"Who wrote you that?"

“Ramsey Polk. He told me I had better sell out.”

“According to my notion, he has misinformed you; and the company is in a highly prosperous condition.”

“So I have already learned through a lawyer I hired to investigate. Is this what you wish to see me about?”

“I wanted to see you about the claim my father had on the company at the time of his death. If you will remember, my mother got only about two thousand dollars —”

“But Ramsey Polk paid her twenty-six thousand dollars later on,” interposed the old tea-merchant.

“Twenty-six thousand dollars! He didn’t pay her a cent more than the law compelled him to pay.”

“But he wrote to me that he had paid it to her,” insisted Amos Bartlett.

“Then he wrote that which was not true. Did you know that there was twenty-six thousand dollars coming to her?”

“I did. Your father turned over the certificates of stock to Polk just before he died. I wrote to Polk about it, and he wrote back as I have told you.

So neither you nor your mother ever got the money? This looks like a deliberate swindle. Well, I am not surprised — after the game Polk tried to work upon me. He is a bad egg.” And Amos Bartlett shook his head sadly.

“I met Nuggy Polk by accident in Manila,” continued Gilbert, and related the particulars of the affair. “If he turns up here, he will get the better of you if he can. But probably he will be too scared to come to Tien-Tsin just now.”

“I don’t believe he can harm me — since I have learned the truth of matters in Richmond and since you have warned me. As soon as the present war is over, I shall go to work to bring Ramsey Polk to a strict accounting.”

“And will you aid me in my suit against him?” asked Gilbert, anxiously.

“Certainly I will, lieutenant. Your father and I were great friends, and I will do all in my power to see that justice is done you.”

Amos Bartlett extended his hand, and Gilbert took it again. By this time the refreshments were ready to be served, and the whole party moved to a piazza of the residence where it was more shady.

The move was a providential one; for hardly were the party seated around the table which the Chinese servant had spread when there came a low and sudden whine, as of something in deadly pain, and a shell burst directly in the top of a tree growing in the centre of the garden. The report was followed by a shower of small branches and leaves, and then it was seen that the tree had been split in twain almost from top to bottom.

“Creation! but that was close!” cried Gilbert; while Jennie Bartlett shrieked from fright. Then the young lieutenant looked at the split tree. “Get out of the way!” he ejaculated hoarsely. “It’s coming down on top of us!”

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SPY IN THE RIVER

GILBERT had been sitting next to Jennie Bartlett; and, as he uttered the words recorded in the last chapter, he caught the young lady by the arm. There was a window of the house handy,—a long affair, reaching to the piazza floor,—and through this he sprang, taking the frightened miss with him.

Bang! crash! One side of the tree struck the piazza fairly and squarely; and in a twinkling the roof was completely shattered, the table with its dishes crushed flat, and Amos Bartlett was caught and pinned to the ground, with his wife beside him. There was a cloud of dust and splinters, followed by a yell from the Chinese servant, who was of the opinion that the whole building was doomed, and who fled out of the house and up the street at his best speed.

“Oh!” came from Jennie Bartlett. “Father and mother!”

"It is over now," said Gilbert, as the crashing stopped and the dust began to settle. "You were not touched, were you?"

"No; but poor father and mother —" She could say no more.

Leaving the girl in the house, Gilbert stepped outside once more. A glance showed him that the tree had settled as far as possible, so danger from this source was now over. He ran to the side of the elder Bartletts, to find Mrs. Bartlett trying to regain her feet. The lady had a slight bruise on the shoulder, but was otherwise uninjured.

"My husband! He is dead!" she panted. "Oh, poor Amos! What shall I do now?"

"He isn't dead. He is only unconscious," said Gilbert, as he knelt by the tea-merchant's side, and applied his ear to the elderly man's breast. "His heart still beats. See, he has been struck in the back of the head." And he pointed out the wound, from which the blood was trickling.

"What shall I do?" repeated Mrs. Bartlett, wringing her hands. The disaster had completely unnerved her.

"Get a little water and a towel, and we will

bind up his head. Is there a doctor anywhere about?"

"There is a doctor on the street behind ours,—Dr. Fairchild."

The water and a bandage were brought; and Amos Bartlett was raised up, taken into the house, and placed on a couch. By this time he was regaining his senses, and he slowly opened his eyes.

"Oh!" he murmured, and looked around him. "My wife and Jennie, where are they?"

"We are safe, Amos," answered his wife; "but you have been hurt." And the tears sprang to her eyes. "Oh, how I wish we had all gone to Taku!"

"Yes, perhaps it would have been best. Oh, my head and my back! I feel as if I should never be able to walk again!"

"O papa, do not say that!" burst out Jennie. "Does your back hurt you very much?"

"It feels numb, as if it was paralyzed." Amos Bartlett gave a groan he could not suppress. "The weight of the—the tree was more than I—I—could stand!" He gave a gasp, and then fainted away.

More alarmed than ever, Mrs. Bartlett begged

Gilbert to go for the doctor she had mentioned; and, receiving directions as to where the medical man lived, the young lieutenant hurried off, through a lane to the rear of the warehouse. As he ran along, he heard several shells whistling through the air; but none came down in that immediate vicinity.

Reaching the doctor's residence, his message was quickly delivered; and Dr. Fairchild returned with him to Amos Bartlett's home. It was found that the tea-merchant had again recovered consciousness; but he was now in a fever, and talked wildly.

"This is a bad case," whispered the doctor to Gilbert. "He may be paralyzed, and that blow on the head may affect his brain. I will do my best for him, but you know as well as I that his age is greatly against him."

"Yes, do your best by all means," answered the young officer. "I hope he recovers entirely, for the sake of his wife and daughter."

Gilbert remained with the family for an hour longer; and during that time the Chinese servant came sneaking back, and began to put the house in order. "Welly muchee flightened me," said the ser-

vant to Gilbert. "Shung Sing flink whole house clom down on head."

"Well, you are frank about it," was Gilbert's comment. "Don't you run away again! Your mistress needs you." And the Chinaman promised to stay, but Gilbert knew that his word amounted to nothing. Shung Sing was honest and a hard worker; but he thought more of his own skin than of anything else in the world, and was prepared to run at the least alarm.

When Gilbert returned to camp, he found an earnest consultation going on among the officers. A guard was needed at a certain point along the river, where a pontoon bridge was to be put down; and it was finally decided that the guard should consist of a company of Americans and a company of British infantry. Captain Banner's command was called out; and by nightfall Gilbert found himself stationed along the Pei-Ho once more, near a row of deserted huts of bamboo and mud. There was a small road running down to the stream at this point; and the Americans guarded one side of the highway, while the English detachment guarded the other.

It was felt that the utmost caution must be exer-

cised, especially during the night; and, after going the rounds himself, Captain Banner, on turning in, requested Gilbert to keep his eye on the corporal of the guard and the pickets.

"There is a rumor out that several Chinese spies are around," said the commander of Company A. "If it is true, we don't want any of them slipping through our lines."

"I'll caution the boys myself," said Gilbert.

It must be confessed that, though tired, the young lieutenant did not feel in the humor for sleeping. His mind was filled with what Amos Bartlett had told him, and he could not help but wonder if the tea-merchant would recover.

"If he doesn't recover, his evidence against Ramsey Polk will be lost," thought Gilbert, dismally. "I believe I ought to take what he has to say down in writing, get him to sign it, and then have it witnessed." The more he thought of this, the more necessary did it seem to become; and, at last, he resolved to have the evidence put on paper at the first opportunity.

The night was dark, and it looked as if it might rain at any moment. A hot air was blowing from up

the river, carrying with it a smell that was far from pleasant. The picket line stretched a distance of two hundred yards; and at one point there was a truck garden, now deserted, containing potatoes, onions, and a few vegetables peculiar to this district of China.

As Gilbert went the rounds, he came upon Carl Stummer, who was stationed where there was an inlet surrounded by a fringe of tall reeds. He found the German soldier peering intently into the reeds.

"See anything unusual?" he asked in a low voice.

"Hush!" came in a whisper. "I dink a Chink vos schwimmin' out dare!"

At once Gilbert became silent, and felt of his pistol to see if the weapon was ready for use.

A few minutes passed,—just then the time seemed much longer,—and Carl pointed to a spot just beyond the reeds. "See dot?" he asked lowly. "Is dot a log of vood?"

Gilbert did not reply immediately, for he was straining his eyes to pierce the semi-darkness. He felt certain that what the German soldier saw was a log of wood; but it was moving along in an uncer-



"SEE ANYTHING UNUSUAL?" HE ASKED. — Page 180.

tain fashion, as if the tide was sending it one way and some unknown agency another.

"Something is under or behind it," he answered at last, in a voice which Carl could scarcely hear. "Perhaps the log is hollow."

"Chust vot I vos dinkin'," replied the regular. "Und I vos dink der vos von Chink under dot log, hey?"

"I shouldn't be much surprised. Have you a bit of rope handy?"

"Rope?"

"Yes; a piece about thirty feet long?"

"Yes, dare vos a rope up der stream, vere da stharterd to but town dot pondoon pridge."

"I will get it, and we'll soon see if that is only a log or not."

Running to where the engineering corps had been at work, the young lieutenant quickly procured the rope Carl had described, and also a bit of an iron bar with a ring at one end. Through the ring Gilbert shoved an end of the rope, and made it fast.

"Here goes," he said, as he rejoined Carl. "If that is nothing but a log, it will come in easily enough."

Holding fast to one end of the rope, he let fly with the other, that containing the bit of iron. His aim was true; and with a splash the iron landed in the water on the outer side of the log. Then Gilbert began to pull in.

No sooner was this movement commenced than an extraordinary thing occurred. The log gave a sudden wobble, and seemed about to turn over, when up came a yellow hand and arm, and hauled it back. Although he was not positive, Gilbert imagined that he also saw the top of a yellow man's head.

"He's there, sure enough," said the young lieutenant.

"Shall I shoot at him?" asked Carl, raising his rifle.

"Not yet." Gilbert raised his voice. "Come in here!" he called out.

To this there was no reply, and he gave a sudden yank on the rope. Over came the log, in spite of the efforts of the yellow man under it. Then came a splash, and the two on shore saw a Chinaman swimming away for his very life.

"Stop, or we'll fire at you!" cried Gilbert.

But the Celestial would not stop; and, raising his pistol, the young lieutenant blazed away. At the same instant Carl's gun spoke up; and both reports were followed by a scream of pain, for the shots had entered the fellow's shoulder.

"I think he would rather die than be captured," said Gilbert. "But we must take him if we can. He may prove to be an important capture. No ordinary Chinaman or Chinese soldier would be swimming around here this time of night."

"Of I vos a first-class schwimmer, I vos chump in for him," replied the German. "Put he might grab me und drown me, hey?"

By this time the corporal of the guard was hurrying to the spot, wanting to know what the two shots meant. He was a tall, powerful fellow from South Dakota, and was perfectly willing to leap into the stream and bring in the "pig-tail" by his hair, as he expressed it, although he 'allowed as how it would be dead easy to plug him fer keeps.'

"I don't wish him killed," answered Gilbert. "Bring him in if you can, but beware that he doesn't knife you."

"I'll have my eyes open, lieutenant," said the

corporal. "I've been in the mines where the Chinks worked, and I know 'em all around."

The corporal was soon in the water, and his powerful strokes speedily took him to where the Chinaman was making for the other side of the Pei-Ho. Although wounded, there was still a good deal of fight left in the yellow man; and it was not until the corporal hauled off, and hit him in the back of the neck, that he became limp and next to helpless. Then he was dragged ashore, and made a prisoner.

The Chinaman was well dressed, and had on even his elaborately decorated wooden shoes. He would not speak, although it was afterward learned that he understood English very well.

At Captain Banner's tent the prisoner was submitted to a thorough search. On the inner side of one of his garments a little pocket was discovered, containing several sheets of rice paper, very thin and folded into the smallest possible space. The prisoner tried to throw these sheets away, but Gilbert saw and prevented the movement.

On the sheets of paper was a message, written in Chinese, which no one in the camp could decipher.

"We'll have to take it to the colonel," said Captain Banner.

The matter was talked over; and a little later Gilbert was sent off on the mission, and with him went Dan Casey and a private named Hunter, as a guard. In the mean time the prisoner's wounds were attended to, and then he was tied up in the guard-tent.

The colonel was stopping at a deserted Chinese residence, nearly half a mile from the river. He had with him the third battalion, who were guarding a line of communication leading to the Taku road.

Fortunately, the way to the residence was already known to Gilbert; otherwise the party of three must have been lost on the road, which wound in and out over the marshland, with here and there a dangerous ditch to cross, where the Boxers had torn up the sods, so that no artillery or cart train might pass. Occasionally there would come to their ears the dismal croak of a night bird, feeding upon some corpse in the vicinity. On every hand were those mounds of the dead, previously mentioned. But Gilbert was growing used to them now, and he scarcely noticed them.

"Who goes there?"

It was a cry from out of the darkness; and, stand-

ing along the roadway, the young lieutenant saw a picket from the third battalion, with gun levelled, ready to shoot.

“Friends!” shouted Gilbert.

“Advance, one friend, and give the countersign,” went on the picket, still keeping his rifle levelled; but, when he caught sight of Gilbert, he lowered the weapon. “Oh, it’s you, lieutenant.”

“Yes, my man.” Gilbert gave the countersign, which was Manila. “Can you tell me if the colonel is up at the house?”

“He was an hour ago.”

Gilbert passed on, and his guard with him. At the entrance to the house another picket challenged him; but he soon went in, and the colonel was aroused.

The Chinese message puzzled the commander as much as it had Captain Banner. “I must find some Chinese scholar for this,” he said, and proceeded to hunt up a missionary without delay. When translated, the message ran as follows:—

“All is ready to blow up the Cross Mission. The powder train leads from Chow Fun’s house. Will fire at signal of three rockets. CHING WO.”

CHAPTER XIX

SAVING THE MISSION HOUSE

“THE rascals!” burst from the colonel’s lips.
“It is lucky you caught that spy.”

Gilbert read the translation of the message with as much interest as any one. “It makes a close shave for those at the Mission House,” was his comment. “I think —” He stopped short.

“What do you think, Lieutenant Pennington? Don’t be afraid to talk in a crisis like this.”

“You’ll excuse me then, colonel; but of course you’ll inform those at the mission —”

“At once,” finished the commander of the regiment. “But I was thinking of what it says about Chow Fun’s house. I wonder if that place is known to the consul?”

“More than likely, for it cannot be very far from the consulate and the Mission House.”

“The consulate is full of people. Captain McCalla is there, and several other officers, and one or two missionaries and their families.”

“Shall I carry the message?”

The colonel thought for a moment. “You may as well, for there is no staff officer at hand. Tell them they must catch this Chow Fun if they can, and any accomplices he may have.”

“I will,” replied Gilbert.

“You may ride the distance, in order to save time. There are plenty of horses, so your companions can ride, too.”

Five minutes later the party of three were off in the midnight darkness. Dan Casey had been to the consulate twice on errands for his superiors, so he knew the road fairly well; and on they flew at the top of their horses’ speed.

“They may not wait for the rocket signal,” said Gilbert. “If they suspect anything is wrong, they may fire that powder at any moment.”

“An’ thin the Mission House would be blown sky-high,” returned Casey. “Say, but thim Chinks is vipers now, ain’t they?”

“We just want to catch that Chow Fun,” put in Hunter. “I’ll wager he’s a bad one,—and a daring one, too,—or he wouldn’t hang so close around the enemy.”

"It's a bad plan to trust all of the so-styled Christian Chinese," said Gilbert. "They are no more religious than their heathen brothers, and they will all stab us in the back if they can. I don't believe one in ten is, at heart, a real out-and-out Christian."

There was little chance to say more, for the plunging of the horses rendered conversation difficult. The road was better than close to the river, but still full of holes; and once Casey was thrown, and Gilbert was afraid the Irishman had broken his neck.

"Are you hurt, Dan?" he cried.

"The — the wind is out av — av me!" gasped Dan. "But there's nothin' busted but me — me timper. Bad cess to ye, you villain!" And, rising to his feet, he belabored his steed so earnestly that the horse pranced in all directions.

"Don't do that, Dan," went on Gilbert. "It will do no good. The horse didn't go into the hole for fun. It's a wonder he didn't break a leg."

"He's got no sinse, lieutenant," growled the Irishman. "Sure, an' why didn't he look where he's afther goin'?" He leaped again into the saddle, and held a close rein, and the remainder of the journey was passed without any further trouble.

At the consulate all was dark save for a light on the porch of the rather pretty building. A guard was out, who informed them that the consul and his guests were all asleep.

"You must have the consul aroused at once," said Gilbert. "Tell him I have a message for him of great importance." And then he added in a lower tone, "Has he any Chinese around?"

"Not just now."

"All right. If any Chinamen do turn up, arrest them on the spot."

A second guard was summoned, and presently the consul appeared, in his dressing-gown. He read the message with keen interest.

"The Cross Mission to be blown up!" he ejaculated. "This is awful! I must get the folks out of the building at once."

"Let us investigate first," said Gilbert. "Is there a cellar under the building?"

"Yes, a small one."

The consul led the way to the mission, which was close by, followed by Gilbert and several others. A well-covered lantern was taken along, and a minute inspection began of the cellar. In one corner was

found a large, square box of powder; and running into this was a fuse enclosed in a small copper tubing. Without hesitation, Gilbert pulled the fuse from the box; and all danger of having the mission blown up was over.

“Phew! but that was an escape!” said one of the party, wiping the cold sweat from his forehead. “If that had gone off, all of us would have been blown to Kingdom Come.”

The box of powder was removed to a safe place; and then the party went upstairs, told the mission folks of what was going on, and returned to the consulate.

“And now, if you let me know something about this Chow Fun, we’ll try to bag him,” said the young lieutenant, who believed in the old saying, “Make hay while the sun shines.”

“The house is on the next block,—the small white place behind the stone wall,” replied the consul. “There are two brothers, Chow Fun and Chow Ching. Up to now I had thought them very friendly.”

Taking two of Captain McCalla’s marines and his own men with him, Gilbert set off for the house of

Chow Fun, followed by several private people who had been lodging at the mission. Everybody was armed, and all made the visit on foot.

At the Chinaman's home all was dark, and the iron gate was found barred and locked.

"We'll scale that wall," said Gilbert, and detailed one of the marines to keep watch on the outside, along with the two citizens who happened to be armed with guns.

At that moment a dog inside of the Chinese compound, as an enclosure there is sometimes called, began to bark. Undaunted by this, however, Gilbert scrambled over the wall; and with him went Dan Casey and the others. The house lay just beyond, and it was found that the dog was tied up beside the front door. The building was of stone, and presented the appearance of a miniature fortress; for the Chinese rarely have windows on the street side of a home.

"Go around to the back, Dan," ordered Gilbert. And, subduing the dog, he rapped loudly on the door with his sword.

For fully a minute there was no sound from within. Then came light footsteps, first to the front

door and then to the back. A low murmur of voices followed.

"Open that door, I tell you," went on Gilbert, rapping again. "If you won't, we'll batter it down."

"What you Amelicans wantee?" came a voice from the top of the door; and Gilbert saw that a small wicket had been opened.

"We want to see Chow Fun."

"Chow Fun no here. Chow Fun go to Taku."

"Where is Chow Ching?"

"He all go way, too."

"Then let us in, anyway," went on Gilbert, impatiently. "Be quick about it, too."

"No can come in. We alle right. We no makee Amelicans no trouble, not muchee," went on the Celestial, and closed the little wooden shutter in Gilbert's face.

"You won't open, eh?" muttered the young lieutenant. "Come, Hunter, let us see what we can do."

The dog now began to grow savage again, at which one of the citizens who had come along clubbed him over the head with his gun, silenc-

ing him forever. Then soldiers and citizens put their shoulders to the door, and it went down with a crash.

A yell in Chinese followed. "No clome in here, no shootee!" A scurry of footsteps came after in the inky darkness of the abode, and all was as silent as the grave.

A match was struck, and a lamp lit; and, hardly had this been done, when there came a shot from the rear of the dwelling, followed by a cry from Dan Casey. "Take that, ye haythin!" exclaimed the Irish regular. "Lieutenant, they are after tryin' to git out av a hole in the cellar!"

Light in hand, Gilbert ran through the house. Another shot rang out; and a bullet hit the lamp, knocking it from his hand and scattering the oil in every direction. Gilbert's arm caught fire, but the flame was quickly extinguished. Most of the oil flew upon a large rush curtain hanging between two rooms, and in a trice the curtain was blazing lively and filling the residence with smoke.

"We'll have to get out of here," cried Hunter, who was just behind Gilbert. "If we don't, we'll be burnt up like rats in a trap."

“What became of that Chinaman we were talking to?”

“He ran to the back,” said the citizen who had followed the soldiers up.

They had barely time to regain the garden, when the flames shot through the house from top to bottom; for it was flimsily built inside and as dry as tinder.

Another shot now came from the rear; and, rushing in that direction, Gilbert found Casey on the ground, in a desperate struggle with two Chinamen, one of whom was trying to knife the soldier.

“Let up! Hilp!” yelled Dan. “That fer ye! an that!” And he rolled over, and struck out heavily. In this manner one Chinaman was disposed of; but the other, the fellow with the knife, let drive, and the blade struck the Irishman in the calf of the leg.

Gilbert saw how desperate was the encounter; and, leaping to one side, he fired at the Celestial with the knife, hitting him in the arm. As the fellow sprang up to run, the citizen also fired; and then the yellow man dropped like a lump of lead, with a bullet through his brain.

“Good fer you!” gasped Casey, and got up. The

second Chinaman was too dazed to move just yet, and he was quickly made a prisoner.

In the mean time Hunter was having his hands full on the outside of the wall; for two other Chinamen had tried to escape from the building and grounds by a side way, leading to a lane between several warehouses. Hunter had hold of one Celestial, and the other was fighting the two marines. Presently the two Celestials managed to get together, and they ran down the lane for dear life. The crowd followed, and one Chinaman was shot dead. The other, however, managed to escape.

By this time a crowd was collecting, and the house was burning so fiercely that to save any of the contents was impossible. It was allowed to burn to the ground, the fire department merely taking care that the conflagration did not spread.

After the excitement was over, it was found that the two Chinamen who had been killed were Chow Fun, the owner of the building, and Ching Wo, the rascal who had plotted the destruction of the consulate and who had sent off the spy captured by Gilbert, Stummer, and the corporal of the guard. The man who had been captured was a relative of

Ching Wo and an officer in the Chinese army under Prince Tuan. The man who had escaped, it was later on learned, was Chow Ching, the younger brother to Chow Fun, and the fellow who had answered Gilbert's summons at the door. Gilbert never expected to see this rascal again, but in this surmise the young lieutenant was mistaken.

CHAPTER XX

THE BOMBARDMENT OF TIEN-TSIN

THE first half of the month of July was a busy time for all the allied forces operating in and around the foreign section of Tien-Tsin.

In round figures the Allies did not number on July 10 more than sixteen thousand effective men. How many Boxers and Chinese government troops there were to oppose them will probably never be known, but they certainly footed up to forty or fifty thousand.

The enemy were located in the walled native city, where they had over fifteen thousand troops and four heavy guns; across the Pei-Ho, where they had several field-pieces, with more coming up every day; and on the great plain to the west of Tien-Tsin, where it was feared that an army was forming so vast that the Allies would be swept out of existence by the mere force of numbers.

The bombardment of the foreigners continued al-

most night and day; and property to the value of millions of dollars was destroyed, including many ancient and beautiful buildings which can never be replaced. The regular railroad bridge over the Pei-Ho was already gone, and the pontoon bridges erected were subjected to such a constant and accurate fire that to cross any of them involved a great risk. On one of these bridges a Hong Kong English detachment was caught, and almost cut to pieces.

The bombardment called for many deeds of daring; for communications with Taku were kept open only with the utmost difficulty, and the re-enforcements coming up had literally to fight their way through miles of hostile country to reach the real battlefield. All telegraph wires had been cut, and the engineering corps could not repair them until the fall of the native quarter of Tien-Tsin was almost assured.

There was a great rivalry between the English, Russians, and Germans over the control of the railroad; and many were the trials made for opening the line to Tongku, the Chinese ripping up the rails almost as fast as they were put down. Two locomotives were stationed near the battered round-house,

and one day some Russian troops went out to man them. The detachment divided into two parts; and, while one engaged the attention of the enemy, the other leaped aboard the engines and several box cars, and went off at the best rate of speed of which the old locomotives were capable. As soon as the Chinese discovered what was up, they trained their guns on the locomotives, and nearly knocked one off the track. Nevertheless, the rolling stock was saved; and to-day the engines are running on the Taku-Tien-Tsin line as before the war.

During the first days of the bombardment the Allies suffered greatly for the want of siege guns. The majority of the troops had come from the Gulf in the notion that they were to march directly upon Peking, with the guns to follow later on. Only the Japanese had a few small pieces, which could not reach the larger pieces of the Chinese.

But all this was changed with the coming of some British artillery, guns which had done duty in South Africa against the onslaughts of the plucky Boers, and which were appropriately labelled, "From Ladysmith to Peking." These guns were stationed close to the west wall, where the Chinese artillerists could

not see them; and they were aimed by the aid of flag signals from the top of Gordon Hall.

On the morning of July 9 it was felt that the position regarding communications with Taku was growing critical. The Chinese were well planted with their guns on the north bank of the Pei-Ho; and their troops on the western plain were gradually circling southward and to the east, in order to reach the other bank of the stream, thus cutting off the Allies' connection with the outside world.

"Something is up to-day, sure," remarked Captain Banner to Gilbert. "The Chinese are enfilading our twelve-pounders, and the British gunners can't hold their position unless relief is given."

"I see that our marines are getting ready to move," replied the young lieutenant. "I wish we were going with them. I am tired of doing nothing but guard duty."

"Don't fret. We have still plenty of fighting before us," was the captain's reassuring answer.

Early that morning a detachment of the Allies, including a hundred American marines, with two thousand Japanese, English, and Russians, marched to the Taku gate of the outer city, and then down the bank

of the Pei-Ho. They soon came in sight of the Chinese force on the plain; and a battle at long range started, lasting for several hours. Gradually the Chinese were forced around to the West Arsenal, and then they fled. They were pursued by the cavalry; and a party of six hundred Boxers were cut to pieces almost to a man, the Japanese horsemen riding over them rough-shod. In this fight the arsenal was captured, also four field-pieces, and over a score of Chinese banners, including the dreaded head-spear flag of the Boxers. A head-spear flag is one of black, mounted on a bamboo pole, topped with a human skull.

Gilbert's company was stationed close to the river still, and was under more or less fire all the time. The pickets often indulged in "sniping," as it is termed; and many a Boxer who exposed himself was laid low most unexpectedly. But the Chinese also did some sharpshooting; and the soldiers soon found it expedient to keep out of sight of the enemy, even at long range.

The weather was most disagreeable. When it was not raining, the sun shone down with the fury of a fiery furnace; and, during the middle of the day,

working at anything was out of the question for all but the Japanese, who never seemed to mind the heat in the least. What these little men from the Mikado's domain could do and endure was a constant source of wonder and astonishment to the rest of the Allies. "They are the backbone of this whole movement," said Gilbert; and Major Morris agreed with him.

"They used to jeer at the Japanese, just as they jeer at the Chinese," said the major. "But Mr. Jap is all there every time."

It was not until several days later that Gilbert managed to get away, in order to call again upon Amos Bartlett and his family. He had heard of a serious fire in that neighborhood, and wondered if it had reached the tea-merchant's residence.

He found the house untouched, although in much disorder, with the wreck of the back porch and the fallen tree still littering the enclosed garden. The fire had found the huge warehouse; and a back addition had been consumed, while the contents of the main building had suffered much from smoke and water.

"I am glad to see you, lieutenant," said Mrs. Bart-

lett, as she shook him by the hand. "You said you would do what you could for us, and now I wish you to do me a favor."

"Anything I can do, I'll do willingly," was Gilbert's prompt reply. "But how is your husband?"

At once the smile that had come into Mrs. Bartlett's face for a moment faded away. "He is not doing so well," she said lowly. "He does not seem to be able to get back to his right mind. And the fire has set him back, too."

"What does the doctor say?"

"He says it is a peculiar case, and that my husband must have rest as much as medicine. But how can he have rest here?" And the woman wrung her hands.

Jennie Bartlett now appeared, and also shook hands. She said her father had heard Gilbert's voice, and wished the young officer to come to him.

"Be careful of what you say to him," whispered Mrs. Bartlett. "He is easily excited, and excitement is the worst possible thing for him."

"I will be careful," answered Gilbert, and followed her into the sick-chamber. He found Amos

Bartlett lying on a wide bed in the centre of the room, and the Chinese servant was fanning him. The sufferer looked years older than when Gilbert had seen him before.

"So it is you, Pennington?" said Amos Bartlett, in a strangely unnatural voice. "I am glad to see you. I have been wanting to talk over that Importing Company's affair with you. We have millions at stake, and —"

"Amos, please do not speak of that now," interposed Mrs. Bartlett, soothingly. "I am sure Lieutenant Pennington will wait until you are better."

"Yes; but, Viola, Ramsey Polk is a black-hearted swindler. He would ruin us all, sweep away our millions, and leave us beggars. And the fire, too! We shall be penniless, starving in the streets! Pennington can save us. I have thought it all over. He must fight a duel with Polk; and, being a soldier, he can easily run his man through. And then — ah, then we will be saved! Is it not an easy plan, Pennington?" And the sufferer turned his white and haggard face to the young Southerner.

Gilbert started, for he had not anticipated such a turn of affairs. Clearly, Amos Bartlett was out of

his head, perhaps on the verge of insanity. What should he do? He looked at the sorrowful faces of the wife and the daughter, and that decided him.

"Mr. Bartlett, everything is all right," he said, as he took the sick man's hand and held it. "Ramsey Polk will be brought to justice without my staining my hands with his blood. He cannot touch what belongs to you, and what is coming to me will soon be in my possession. So you can afford to take it easy, and not bother your head about these matters."

At these words Amos Bartlett stared again at Gilbert. Then his eyes fell. "You are sure of this? Sure he cannot make me a beggar?" he muttered.

"Yes, I am sure."

"And that fire? The warehouse was full of valuable tea. They will not let me get up to see how much damage was done."

"The main warehouse was not touched, so your loss will not be heavy. Just take it easy for a week or so, and everything will straighten itself out. I have got Polk where I want him, and I know what I am doing."

"Thank you, Pennington. You are a wonderful young man. And we shall not be beggars! I am so

thankful, for the sake of my wife and Jennie!" And here the sufferer fell back exhausted, closed his eyes, and went off into a doze.

Mrs. Bartlett motioned Gilbert out of the room; and he followed her, on tiptoes. "Is it not awful?" she burst out, when the door was closed behind them. "What shall I do? What can I do?"

"I don't know of anything, excepting to keep him quiet. Has he been this way long?"

"Ever since the fire. Every shot near the house seems to affect him."

"Then he ought to be removed from Tien-Tsin."

"But would that be safe? I understand every boat coming or going on the river is under fire."

"That is true. But I think this bombardment will soon come to an end. More of our troops are arriving, and we will soon make an attack on the native city in force. Once we have cleaned out that section, I think the whole Chinese army will retreat toward Peking."

"I trust the relief comes soon," put in Jennie. "This cannon-firing day after day is enough to drive one mad! And to have poor papa down sick—" Her throat choked up, and she could not go on.

Gilbert was affected, but did not dare to show it. "I am sorry. I will do what I can for you," he murmured, and gave her a look which meant a good deal. Then he turned to the mother. "What favor did you wish of me?"

"I wanted you to ask at the consulate for a marine or two to guard the warehouse. Ever since the fire the looters have been out in force, and I am afraid that what was not burned will be stolen."

"I will do what I can in the matter. And is that all?"

"I wished to find out about getting to Taku. If the bombardment grows worse, we cannot remain here."

"Would you care to remove to Gordon Hall?"

"If my husband was not sick, I would go. But that would be no place for him; and the hospital would be still worse. If we could get him down the river in secret, that would be best of all."

"Then I will find out for you when the next large boat goes down to Taku, and what the chances will be of getting through without harm."

"If you will do that, lieutenant, I shall be very glad," said Mrs. Bartlett. And then she added in a

lower voice, "I am sorry that you, too, are disappointed."

"How do you know I am disappointed?"

"You were in hopes that my husband was better, and could give you more information about Ramsey Polk. Is that not so?"

"To tell the truth, it is. But—well, we will drop that now, and hope everything comes out right in the end."

The Bartletts wished Gilbert to wait and have some refreshments; but his time was limited, and he soon took his departure. As he hurried back to camp, he fell into a brown study.

"Matters don't look as bright as they did," he soliloquized. "Even if Mr. Bartlett gets well physically, his mind may be affected; and in that case his evidence in my favor won't count. And, if he gets down to Taku and Nuggy Polk finds him, that rascal will probably do all he can to worry the poor man to death."

CHAPTER XXI

CHARGING UPON THE NATIVE QUARTER

"WE are out for a fight to-day, lieutenant, and a hot one, if I know anything about it."

It was Captain Banner who spoke, on the day following Gilbert's visit to the Bartletts. The young lieutenant had succeeded in getting a guard of one for the tea warehouse, but had been unable to learn anything concerning the boats on the Pei-Ho. Troops were coming in rapidly; and shipping arrangements were, consequently, much confused.

"All right. I am ready for the biggest engagement of the campaign," laughed Gilbert.

"An' dot vos me," put in Carl Stummer. "I ton't vont to got rusty on dot bicket line no more."

The whole company were hard at work cleaning up their uniforms and weapons, for the outward movement was to begin promptly at noon. Soldiers were everywhere in evidence. The Russians and Germans were encamped between the Chinese city and the

river; while on the opposite side of the native quarter were the French, English, Japanese, and American, in the order named.

The opening movement was made by the Russians, and some Germans, who swung to the northward to take the river forts and prevent, if possible, any Celestial troops from coming across the Pei-Ho to re-enforce those in the native city.

In the mean time the Japanese commander, General Fukushima, started for the moat before the great south gate of the inner city. All the cannon in that vicinity were to clear the way for the Japanese, who were then to rush in, and blow up the gate with dynamite, so that the allied infantry might enter.

The various movements were well planned, but hard to execute; for all the Allies communicated with each other only with the greatest difficulty. The Russians reached the first forts with ease; but then the fire of the other forts was turned upon them, also a fire from across the Pei-Ho, and they lost heavily.

Meanwhile the British and Japanese cannon-fire was directed toward the great south gate; and

the Japanese rushed forward, followed by the English troops, with the American marines on the extreme left. The Ninth United States Infantry were ordered to get in further down the road, which meant in an open space not far from the mud wall.

As the Allies neared the south gate, they found that the bridge had been destroyed, and the fields flooded with water. On they went, however, through the liquid mud, almost up to the great gate. But the aim of the Chinese was deadly, and scores of soldiers dropped in a very few minutes. The Allies could not keep the ground they had gained, and fell back to the intrenchments which had first given them shelter.

The sun was blazing down hotly; and, when that first rush was over, Gilbert was almost ready to drop with exhaustion. But there was no rest for anybody, for the various commanders realized that it was "now or never"; for, if the native city was not taken, the Chinese troops on the western plain would pour in on them, and they would be cut off from all help.

Colonel Liscum of the Ninth United States Infantry was everywhere along the line, cheering and

encouraging his men. "We must win out," he is reported to have said. "They cannot stand up against us much longer."

The ground was very uncertain, and the whistling of the bullets incessant. The Americans were still in full view of the enemy, and men were dropping on every side. Some distance from the mud wall were a number of native houses; and from these came a galling cross-fire, which presently laid the color-bearer low.

"The flag is down!" was the cry from several throats; but, in a moment, Colonel Liscum ran forward and picked it up. Flag in hand, he started to look for a suitable ford over the canal which ran through the marshland.

"Better get down, or they'll hit you!" shouted one of the under officers.

"I guess not," was the brave colonel's answer; and at that instant a Chinese bullet struck him in the abdomen.

"Are you hit?" asked an officer, who saw him stagger back.

"I've got it," was the feeble reply; and then Colonel Liscum fell, to rise no more. A score of

soldiers rushed to his aid. But nothing could be done for the sufferer; and with these words, "Don't retreat, boys. Keep on firing," he breathed his last.

Several other officers were also shot down and many wounded, while the dead privates lay everywhere. Yet the battle waged on, until the men became almost too tired to move. All were thirsting for something to drink; but the only water at hand was that of the marshes, salty and filled with the corpses of the slain. The doctors could not attend to the wounded, for they were shot as soon as they exposed themselves.

"This is certainly the worst yet," was Gilbert's comment to Captain Banner. The young lieutenant was soaked to the skin, both with water and with perspiration; and his face was covered with the grime of battle. He had been in two advances, and there were bullet-holes through his coat-sleeve and his leggins. "I never saw anything like it in the Philippines."

"Keep down," cried the captain. "We can't afford to lose any more officers. Bruff is dead, over yonder." And he pointed to a stretch of grass where

the second lieutenant lay, with wide-open eyes, staring up at the blazing sky. Poor Bruff had been killed in the first advance.

Slowly the afternoon wore away. The air was heavy with smoke, yet the battalion to which Gilbert was attached did not dare to shift its position for fear of being cut to pieces. In the mean time the Japanese had made a great breach in the south wall of the native city, and were pouring in, unbeknown to any of the other commands.

"We are hemmed in," said Captain Banner. "Unless we get out under cover of night, it will go hard with us."

Gilbert did not answer, for he was tying up a flesh wound in Dan Casey's arm. The brave Irishman was suffering intense pain, and the young lieutenant pitied him from the bottom of his heart.

As the afternoon wore on, the fire of the Chinese became hotter; for they feared a night attack, and wished to make the Allies retreat before that time should come. The native city was on fire in half a dozen places, and inside it was as if pandemonium had broken loose.

At last night settled down, and then Gilbert's bat-

talion began slowly to shift its position. The loss of Colonel Liscum had cast a gloom over all the Americans. He had been a sturdy fighter, and beloved by all who knew him.

The situation was reported to General Dorward, and an effort was made to combine the American forces and those fighting under the Union Jack. By midnight this juncture was made; and then Americans, English, French, and Germans pressed for the great south gate, and, following the Japanese, entered the native city at four o'clock in the morning of July 14, 1900. This was the first substantial victory for the American, in conjunction with other flags, on Chinese soil.

On entering the native town, a scene was presented which baffles description. The shots and shells from the Allies had done frightful execution; and dead Chinese lay at every hand, in some places two and three deep. Houses were smashed to kindling wood, and the very streets showed holes four and five feet deep. In one place a powder magazine had gone up, leaving nothing behind it but a burnt and blackened space with a fringe of battered buildings and dismembered human victims.

The sights made Gilbert sick at heart; and he was glad enough to go back to the wall with his command and stand such guard as was necessary, which was not saying much, since all of the Chinese were fleeing for their lives. I have said all. That is not so, strictly speaking; for some few remained, proclaiming themselves Christians and friends, while a considerable number of others committed suicide. To commit suicide in the Chinese army is not uncommon. For the Celestial soldier believes that, if he is captured, he will be subjected to some awful torture; and he, consequently, much prefers to end his own life.

With one-half of Company A, Gilbert found himself the next day half a mile from the great south gate, where the American flag was flying at half-mast, out of respect for the dead colonel of the Ninth Infantry. Gilbert's duty was to keep watch over several squares of the city, for the looters were now out in force. Close at hand was a Chinese joss house, filled with idols of iron, silver, and gold. Over this an elderly Buddhist priest was presiding, fearful that some of the soldiers would carry off the idols. Those of the war god of the Chinese were

already missing, the Celestial troops having carried them off themselves.

Gilbert was eating his dinner when there came to him a message from the Buddhist priest, asking him to come to the joss house at once, and alone.

"What does the priest want of me?" asked the young lieutenant, curiously.

"He wants advice," was the slow answer. "He is much troubled, and wishes advice in secret."

Thinking he would be safe with a man of such standing as a Buddhist priest, Gilbert agreed to accompany the messenger, who at once led the way to a lane behind the joss house. At the foot of the lane was a small iron door entering into the house of worship. This was ajar, and inside of an entry Gilbert saw some joss sticks burning over a round table set with a platter of meat and another of rice.

"You will go inside, and the good Li Gow will speedily join you," said the messenger, and pointed the way. With some hesitation, Gilbert pushed back the iron door, and entered the apartment where the joss sticks were blazing.

On the instant the door was banged shut and bolted from the outside. The sudden rush of air

caused the joss sticks to go out, leaving the young lieutenant in utter darkness. A shrill, mocking laugh reached his ears; and then all became as silent as a tomb.

CHAPTER XXII

AN ADVENTURE IN A JOSS HOUSE

“TRAPPED, as sure as fate!”

Such were the words which came to Gilbert's lips as he found himself in darkness, with the heavy door of the joss house locked behind him. He felt that he had been badly duped, and that his life was in grave peril.

His first movement was to feel for his pistol, which so far had rested in his belt. Drawing the weapon, he cocked it, and then backed up against the stout door, feeling that an attack could not come from that direction so long as the iron barrier was bolted.

He strained his ears, but all remained silent in the house of idol worship. From a distance came the hum of voices; for the sacking of Tien-Tsin still continued, although those in authority were now making some efforts to stop it. Less than a block from the joss house was a pawnbroker's establish-

ment; and into this soldiers and Chinese beggars had broken, and were wrangling over the possession of everything brought to light.

The gummy joss sticks gave forth a strong odor, which in the confined space was sickening; and presently Gilbert began to cough. The sound echoed dismally throughout the joss house proper, showing that the edifice was almost empty.

"I suppose that old Buddhist is somewhere about," thought the young lieutenant. "I'll venture to say he's none too good to run me through with a sword, if he gets the chance."

He began to speculate upon how to move, feeling that he could not remain in the narrow entry forever, when a faint sound reached his ears, as of somebody approaching in bare feet. He immediately raised his pistol, and tried harder than ever to pierce the gloom which confronted him. But the darkness was absolute, for the windows of the house of worship had been boarded up just before the fall of the city.

The footsteps came closer and closer, until Gilbert judged that the on-comer was less than ten feet away. Then he heard the faint swish of a robe, as it brushed

one end of the table upon which the meal to the dead was spread.

“Stop, or I’ll fire !” cried Gilbert, in a determined voice. Instantly the sounds ceased directly in front of him. But from a distance came a low voice, asking some question in Chinese. What this was, Gilbert did not know ; nor did he hear any answer to it.

The young lieutenant felt that he was now face to face with a deadly enemy, and it must be confessed that the cold perspiration stood out on his forehead. It is one thing to face an enemy in the open : it is quite another to face the same enemy in the dark. Gilbert had heard of bad Western men sometimes fighting a duel to the death with knives in a pitch-dark room, and he felt now that he wanted nothing to do with anything so terrible.

Suddenly he heard a slight noise close to his left side. He was about to turn in the direction, when several grains of rice fell upon his extended hand.

He did not know what to make of this. Had the rice been thrown by some one ? and, if so, for what purpose ? He knew that to touch the food of the

dead is considered by many Chinamen a bad thing to do.

Soon, however, he concluded that the rice had been thrown merely to detract his attention from the person in front of him. The sounds from those bare feet reached him again, but now they were going away instead of approaching.

The enemy was perhaps calculating to attack him in another way, and he could not help but wonder what the next movement would be. Bitterly he regretted having come to the spot without a companion or two. "If I am killed in here, nobody will ever know what became of me," he reasoned, soberly.

His nerves were at the topmost tension, and his ears strained as never before. Consequently, when there came a faint noise from under the table before him, he noted it at once, although it was so slight that an ordinary ear would never have detected it.

Gilbert now remained silent. He had given the enemy fair warning; and he was resolved from now on to "shoot first and talk afterward." He was in the enemy's territory, and he must consider every stranger an enemy until he proved himself a friend.

The table was moving, and so was a portion of the

floor. At first the table was shifted but the fraction of an inch. Then of a sudden it appeared to drop into space, as a trap-door opened to let it down. The disappearance of the feast table is a common thing in many Chinese houses of worship. So to have this trap-door there was nothing out of the ordinary.

Had Gilbert been leaning on the table, as his unseen enemy had likely thought was the case, he must have been pitched headlong into the hole. But, as the table moved, the young lieutenant leaped back, and then to one side. So he still remained on the flooring above, although standing on a space scarcely a foot in width.

As the table shot downward, Gilbert glanced into the hole, and by a faint light coming from a blue lantern, made out the ghost-like form of the Buddhist priest dressed in a combination of yellow and black, and carrying in one hand a long, curved sword. The face was not a crafty one, but, on the contrary, rather holy-looking; and this look kept the young officer from firing. The next instant the trap-door closed again, and all became as dark and silent as before.

The look on the Buddhist's face haunted Gilbert, and he could not get it out of his mind. Why

should such a man wish to take his life? Surely, nature could not make a villain with such a countenance as that.

“He must be a religious fanatic, and imagine that the sacrifice of my life is necessary,” he thought. And this was the exact truth. The old priest had been attached to the joss house for sixty years; and he believed that, if he could only mark the walls of the edifice with the blood of a military enemy slain in the building, before the idol of the god of construction, the building would be saved.

Gilbert now resolved upon a bold movement, which was none other than to feel his way into the joss house proper. He felt that his position in the entry was known, and that a bullet from some unknown source might finish his life at any moment. He knew he was running a risk; but, on the whole, it looked safer to move than to remain where he was.

With pistol in one hand and sword in the other, Gilbert passed from the entry to a wide archway, leading to a broad stone flooring. Here he came upon a series of seven steps, and his arm touched a large stone idol. There was something on the floor in front of the idol; and, as his foot pressed

upon this, a tiny bell at a distance commenced to ring.

The ringing of the bell was followed by a cry of alarm, and then a yell of rage. He heard the footsteps of the old Buddhist priest approaching.

"Let lem alone, dog!" was the cry, in very bad English. "Do not tlouch lem, dog!" The cries continued, and the priest came closer. But, instead of falling directly upon Gilbert, he came up on the opposite side of the idol. He tried to reach the young lieutenant from behind, and his curved sword nipped Gilbert in the back.

Without hesitation the young lieutenant let drive with his pistol. The report and the echo were followed by the falling of a piece of the idol to the floor, and a mad yell from the priest, who now flung himself bodily upon Gilbert. Sword met sword in the darkness; and then the pair clinched and rolled over, down the steps to a cleared space below. The priest was a heavy man, fully six feet tall; and it was he who came down on top.

"Get off!" gasped Gilbert. "Get off, or I will fire!" And he brought around his pistol; but, as it was discharged, his wrist was twisted around, and

the bullet crashed into the roof far above, bringing down dust and splinters upon their heads.

The priest continued to call out; and soon a light appeared, and with it two men, one being the messenger who had come for Gilbert. Both were armed with daggers of the Malay pattern. In a trice Gilbert had the pair at his side, both trying to drag him away, and thus save the old priest from harm.

"Capture him alive! Do not kill him!" screamed the Buddhist priest, in Chinese. "I must have him for a sacrifice."

"We will do our best," answered one of his followers. "But he looks like a mighty fighter."

"So much the better. It is what our good god needs," returned the old Buddhist.

He leaped up, and reached for the lantern, to place it where it would be more to his followers' advantage. Meanwhile the two new-comers were hauling away at Gilbert, one at one arm and the other at the other.

Gilbert could not use his sword, but the pistol was available; and, watching his opportunity, he blazed away, and brought one of the men down with a serious wound in the abdomen. Then he turned

upon the second fellow, and fired once more. But the man dropped his hold and fell flat, and the bullet passed over his head.

The second shot had scarcely left the pistol when Gilbert struggled to his feet. The lantern was a fairly bright one; and by its rays he made out a door at the far end of the joss house, and started to run for it.

"Stop him!" roared the priest, in Chinese; and then, as he saw Gilbert nearing the door, he leaped toward an idol standing to one side of the building. Behind the idol was a knob, attached to a long iron chain. The Buddhist waited until Gilbert had reached a certain spot in the floor, then he pulled upon the huge knob with all his might.

A scraping and a creaking followed; and, of a sudden, the floor beneath the young lieutenant's feet gave way, and he shot down into space. He tried to save himself, but his descent was too sudden. He struck upon a muddy surface, and his head came into contact with a brick wall. Then, for the time being, he knew no more.

CHAPTER XXIII

GILBERT'S NARROW ESCAPE

WHEN Gilbert regained his senses, he found himself bound hands and feet, and lying upon a pallet of straw. The place was a stone cell, and in a niche of the wall a dim lantern was burning.

He wondered how he had come there, and at last concluded that the old priest had had him made a prisoner and carried hither. His head hurt him not a little, and there was a painful sore on his left elbow.

"I suppose I am worse off than I was before," was his dismal conclusion. "That priest will never let me go, now that I have shot one of his followers."

As weak as he was, he endeavored to release himself from his bonds; but the effort proved a failure. His captors had done their work well, and he merely succeeded in cutting his wrists and ankles until the blood came.

His movements created some noise; and presently a door to the cell opened, and the man who had tackled

him and who had escaped the second shot came in. He grinned savagely when he saw that Gilbert's eyes were open, and addressed the prisoner in Chinese.

Not understanding a word, Gilbert made no reply, at which the Boxer — for such the fellow was — gave a growl, and kicked the prostrate officer in the side.

“You're a cheerful brute!” gasped Gilbert, as soon as he could get back the wind of which he had been deprived. “I thought some of our soldiers were unnecessarily cruel; but I reckon you fellows deserve all you are getting, and more.”

The Boxer did not understand, but he guessed that the young lieutenant was finding fault; and he kicked Gilbert again. Then, with another growl, he took down the lantern and went out, leaving his prisoner in darkness.

If the young lieutenant had felt downhearted before, he was now even more discouraged. He was alone, and it was doubtful if any but his enemies were aware of his situation.

“If the boys knew of this, they would come to the rescue,” he reasoned. “But they don't know, and it's likely they won't find out. For once I have put my head into the lion's mouth.”



THE BOXER KICKED THE PROSTRATE OFFICER IN THE SIDE. — Page 230.

Gilbert wondered how long he had been unconscious, but had no means of finding out. His weapons were gone, also the money he had had in his pocket. The latter had been taken by the priest's follower, not by the Buddhist himself.

An hour went by, and the young lieutenant realized that he was both hungry and thirsty. Then came a noise which was far from welcome.

A number of rats had discovered his presence, and they came out of a hole in the wall to sniff at his hands and legs. He hissed them off, and they scampered out of sight. But soon they came back, re-enforced by others; and, when he hissed again, they merely retreated to the side of the cell, evidently realizing that he could not come after them. At last one old rat, probably the father of the colony, advanced, and proceeded to sample the flesh of one of Gilbert's lower limbs.

The yell the young lieutenant gave echoed and re-echoed throughout the cell; and for the minute every rat disappeared, but only for the minute. Then they came back, in greater numbers than ever, and ran all over Gilbert's body.

Try his best, the young officer could not fight off

the rodents ; and he was just beginning to think that he might be eaten up alive, when the cell door opened, and the Buddhist priest appeared, along with his follower. The pair saw at once the cause of the disturbance, and quickly chased the rats out of sight, slaying none of them ; for to the Buddhists animal life is sacred.

The rats having been disposed of, a short talk followed between the priest and his man ; and then the latter caught Gilbert up in his arms, and threw the lieutenant over his shoulder as if he were a bag of flour. Leaving the cell, they ascended a long flight of stone steps, and soon reached the floor of the joss house.

The scene that greeted Gilbert surprised him greatly. In one corner of the gloomy building was a large idol, having one arm up and another down and three eyes, the third being set in the middle of the forehead. In front of this idol rested seven burning joss sticks and three platters of corn-meal, all in a semicircle. In the centre of the semicircle rested a square block of wood, and beside this an axe.

The edge of the axe and the top of the block were

besmeared with what looked like human blood; and, as he gazed at these implements of the Chinese executioner's trade, he could not help but shiver. At this the priest's follower laughed softly; but, turning, the Buddhist struck the man on the mouth, upon which he relapsed into immediate silence.

Reaching the block, the priest motioned his helper to put Gilbert down; and at the same time the holy man began a low chant, which at the opening sounded like a hive of bees when about to swarm. Gradually, the chanting became louder; and the priest then walked around the idol a dozen times or more, hitting it in various places and pounding his forehead and his hips repeatedly. At the end of the chant he threw himself flat, and remained in this position for fully five minutes.

The whole ceremony was so curious that Gilbert would have been deeply interested had he not felt that it was but the forerunner of some attack upon himself.

On rising, the Buddhist priest motioned to his helper to take up the axe; and he himself came forward to feel if the edge of the implement was sharp enough for the work at hand. Satisfied on this

point, the holy man caught Gilbert around the body, and raised him to his feet.

The young lieutenant now felt that he must either do or die, and he resolved to put up the best fight possible. "I'd rather die fighting than be beheaded," he muttered; and, exerting all his strength, he hit the old Buddhist in the stomach with his elbow, and knocked the priest flat.

At once the follower, who had the axe, leaped forward; and for the moment it looked as if Gilbert would be slain where he stood. But, as the blade descended, the young Southerner sprang to one side, and the axe struck the stone flooring. At the same moment came a call from outside.

"Help! help!" cried Gilbert, at the top of his voice. "I am in the joss house! Help!"

"Sto — stop him!" gasped the old priest, as he sat up, out of wind. "Stop him!" And he continued to call out in Chinese.

But now came a crash on one of the windows of the joss house, followed by a rapid succession of blows; and two of the boards were sent flying over one of the idols. Then a soldier appeared in the opening. A gun was levelled, and a report followed.

The man with the axe dropped the weapon, and sank down, fatally shot through the chest.

"Dan Casey!" burst out Gilbert. "Quick, cover the priest!"

"Is it indade you?" came from Dan Casey. "Sure, an' phwat were the haythins up to now, tell me that?"

"They were going to behead me! The priest—quick, Dan!"

Gilbert broke off short; for the Buddhist had leaped upon him, and now had him by the throat. The turn of affairs had rendered the holy man frantic; and he was foaming at the mouth, while his eyes shone like twin stars.

The lights around the idol lit up the scene well, and Dan Casey did not hesitate over what to do. Again his rifle came up; and, as it spoke out, the old Buddhist tottered back, shot through the hip. Once he got up again, but Gilbert easily leaped from his reach. Then he rolled over to the foot of the idol, and lay still.

By this time Casey was coming through the window. Making a leap, he landed on the shoulder of the nearest idol, and from there reached the floor.

He was followed by two other soldiers of Gilbert's company, and all three ran forward to their commander's assistance.

"Oh, how thankful I am that you have come!" murmured Gilbert, when released from his bonds. "A little longer, and it would have been all up with me."

"Sure, an' we have been huntin' fer ye fer the best part av six hours," answered Dan Casey. "How in the worruld did ye git here, I don't know."

"I received a message, and very foolishly came alone. But how did you happen to come to the joss house?"

"I met an English marine, who said he had seen an American lieutenant go into the back dure wid one av thim haythins; an' I put it down for you. Are any more of the Chinks around?"

"No. There were three, but I put one of them out of the fight some time ago. How long is it since I left our headquarters? I have lost track of time."

"Ye left at noon yesterday. It's now tin o'clock in the marnin'."

"Then I was overcome all night by a tumble I took through a trap-door. Casey, I owe you a good

deal for this — and you other men, too,” added the young Southerner.

“That’s all right, lieutenant,” said one of the men. “We are glad we reached you as we did. The troops ought to take possession of this place after this.”

“They shall, Netwood,—and keep a strict guard for underhanded work, too. That old priest — Gracious! What is he up to now?”

Gilbert took a step forward, and so did the others. Then all came to a stop, fascinated by the scene being enacted before them.

Wounded as he was, the old Buddhist had struggled to his feet, and tottered to another idol, one holding a bird and a dog in its hand. Before this idol the priest was waving his hands, and chanting in the same monotonous tone he had before employed. In his right fingers he clutched a dagger, with which he was making circles before the idol’s face.

“Looks as if he was going to carve the idol up,” whispered Netwood.

“Hush!” replied Gilbert. “Look at him! Isn’t it enough to make one’s blood run cold?”

“Hadn’t we better make him a prisoner?” put in

the third soldier of the party. "He may become very dangerous when he's worked up. His eyes —"

The soldier stopped short. The Buddhist priest had turned to look at the Americans. Now he made a horrible face,—like that of a snarling wolf,—and spat at them. Then, turning swiftly, he placed his dagger to his breast, and, looking up at the idol, let himself fall upon the point of the blade.

"He has killed himself!" burst out Gilbert, and leaped forward, followed by his men. But he was too late. When they turned the old priest over, he was stone-dead. Rather than become a prisoner of the enemy, he had taken his own life.

As they gathered around the old man, they noted that the wolf-like expression of the face was gone, and something like a smile had taken its place. Nobody could speak for several seconds, and Gilbert felt a curious lump rise in his throat.

"He's dead!" he murmured hoarsely. "He wanted to take my life, but I don't bear him any grudge. He thought he was in the right, and he lived according to his light. I wish this war was over."

And just then every man who heard those words wished the same.

CHAPTER XXIV

NUGGY POLK'S SET-BACK

LAYING the dead body of the Buddhist priest in the court-yard of the joss house, Gilbert and his men covered it with a matting and some loose stones, that the dogs might not get at it, and then hurried back to the headquarters of the first battalion.

Both Major Morris and Captain Banner were delighted to see the young lieutenant back safe and sound, and all were eager to learn the particulars of his thrilling experience.

"You have had a narrow escape, Pennington," said the major. "You must be more careful of yourself in the future. We have already lost officers enough."

"Rest assured I'll be more careful," answered Gilbert. "I'll venture into no more such lions' dens."

It had been reported to the major that Gilbert had gone off to do some private looting, but this the commander of the first battalion would not believe.

“He’s too much of an American to do that,” said the major. Looting still went on by some of the foreign troops; but the American soldiers were kept in constant check, and two men who would not obey the rules were placed under arrest.

For several days after the adventure at the Chinese house of worship, Gilbert was kept busy attending to his duties as an officer; and, consequently, he got no opportunity to call upon the Bartletts. And during that time he heard nothing as to how Amos Bartlett was faring.

The days to follow the capture of Tien-Tsin were, on the whole, quiet; for the Boxers and the Chinese government troops had fled to parts unknown, and the Allies were as yet in no condition to hunt them up. The cry of “On to Peking!” was frequently heard; but it was felt by all that the troops in Tien-Tsin must be re-enforced before a proper advance could be made.

Troops, however, were arriving daily at Taku and other ports; and the repairs to the railroad between Tien-Tsin and Tongku were pushed forward with all speed. In the past the different nationalities had acted largely on their individual responsibility. It

was now felt that all must act in concert, or a further advance into the enemy's country might be attended with a severe set-back.

During the days spent at Tien-Tsin came news from Peking which was both cheering and alarming. It was to the effect that so far all of the ministers but the German were safe. Several of the legations had been burnt down, and the various foreigners in Peking had retreated to the English compound. They were being bombarded almost daily by the Chinese; and, whereas the Boxers had started the crusade against them, they were now being besieged by the government troops as well. They hoped to hold out until relief came, but both rations and ammunition were alarmingly low.

This news stirred each of the foreign nations as they had never been stirred before. "Peking must be relieved at any cost," was what every one said. "Our ministers and our people must be saved." Then the preparations for the advance were hurried more than ever.

One afternoon, when all was quiet, Gilbert obtained leave of absence for a few hours, and lost no time in hurrying to that section of the foreign

quarter where the Bartletts resided. The walk was one not easily to be forgotten ; for the dead Chinese still lay everywhere, the corpses being continually turned over by the savage "chow" dogs, who would growl fiercely at the approach of man. There was small use in trying to kill these dogs, for they numbered into the thousands.

Arriving in the neighborhood for which he had been bound, the first thing that caught Gilbert's eye was the ruins of the great warehouse which had before been damaged by fire. It was now burnt to the ground, and the broken tea-boxes lay in all directions with the tea stamped in the mud of the roadway.

The tea-merchant's residence had also suffered some ; but, luckily, at the time of the conflagration the wind was in the opposite direction, and only a piazza was burnt off and the side of the building badly scorched.

"That fire must have been an awful shock to Mr. Bartlett," thought Gilbert, and quickened his steps to the side entrance opposite to where the fire had occurred.

As he stood ready to knock on the door, the sound

of a familiar voice broke upon his ear. Nuggy Polk was inside, talking to Mrs. Bartlett and Jennie.

"I think it's foolishness that you won't let me talk to Mr. Bartlett," Nuggy was saying. "I have travelled all the way from the United States for that purpose."

"I am sorry, but my husband is very low," answered the lady of the house. "That last fire completely unnerved him; and our doctor says, if he is not kept perfectly quiet, he may go out of his mind completely."

"I won't excite him, Mrs. Bartlett. In fact, I think what I have to say will make him feel better."

"I presume you came to see about his shares in the Richmond Importing Company."

"That's it. I came to offer him a fair price for his stock. He knows the company is about on its last legs, and that the stock is hardly worth a pinch of salt. But my father wants to push things and build the company up again, and he is willing to give an old shareholder like Mr. Bartlett a fair price for his holdings."

"I don't think my husband wishes to sell out."

At this Nuggy Polk's face grew dark. "He'll

make the mistake of his life, if he doesn't sell out," he returned. "For, if my father can't get hold of the stock, he intends to drop the whole thing; and then the company will be bankrupt inside of three months, and the stock won't be worth the paper it's printed on. If you are wise, you'll get him to sell out, and without delay."

"I shan't bother him now."

"But I've just said it won't bother him," persisted the young man from Richmond.

"I am the best judge of that, Mr. Polk," returned the lady, coldly.

"You had better call next week," put in Jennie. And she added in a whisper to her mother, "Papa may hear him talking, and that will make trouble."

"Yes, Mr. Polk, you can call next week," went on Mrs. Bartlett. "Then, if my husband improves, perhaps you can see him."

"You seem to be in an awful hurry to get rid of me," grumbled the visitor.

"We do not wish you to disturb a very sick man."

"I am not disturbing anybody."

"He may hear you, and any loud talking excites him. I wish you would go away now."

"I'll go away quick enough," said Nuggy Polk, in as loud a voice as ever. "But you don't seem to know what is for Mr. Bartlett's good."

At that moment came a voice from a bed-chamber close at hand. "Viola, who is that? Who is talking about me?" The tone was weak and wild, as if the sick one was suffering from fever.

"Hush! you have already disturbed him!" cried Mrs. Bartlett. "Please go away, please do!" And she motioned Nuggy Polk to the door.

But the young man had no notion of departing just yet, and he held his ground.

"I'm disturbing nobody," he said as loudly as before. "You are standing in your own light. If you'll let me talk to Mr. Bartlett—"

"Hush! do hush!" cried Jennie, in a low voice. "My poor father has a heavy fever, and—"

"Yes, but look here, Miss Bartlett. I offer— Who is this? Pennington, by Jove! Lieutenant, how did you get here?"

"We'll talk about that when we are outside, Polk," answered Gilbert, sternly. "Come out with me."

"Why, I—I don't understand you," stammered Nuggy.

"I told you to come outside. Are you going to obey orders?"

"Orders?"

"Yes, orders. This city is under martial law, and I am a lieutenant in the United States service. Now, then, will you come out, or must I have you placed under arrest?"

For the moment the young man from Richmond was struck speechless. This was an entirely new turn of affairs, and he knew not what to say. As for Gilbert, the young lieutenant did not know if he was doing exactly right; but for the sake of Mrs. Bartlett and Jennie he was willing to risk it.

"You — you will ar — arrest me?"

"Yes, unless you march out of here immediately." And now Gilbert caught the intruder by the arm. "Not another word!" and his face grew so stern that Nuggy collapsed completely. Still keeping hold of his man, Gilbert led the way out of the house and around the corner of the street.

"Lieutenant Pennington, this is an — an outrage!" burst out Nuggy, as soon as he could collect himself.

"It is not half as much of an outrage as it was for

you to disturb the household of a man who is almost on his death-bed."

"I was there for the man's own good."

"I don't think so; and I am pretty certain Mrs. Bartlett doesn't think so, either."

"You talk as if you knew the Bartletts pretty well," sneered the angry young man.

"I have become fairly well acquainted with them since my arrival in Tien-Tsin."

"I suppose you — that is — you overheard some of my talk," continued Nuggy, showing that he was much disturbed.

"I did overhear all I wanted to."

"See here, Pennington, perhaps we had better come to an understanding. I know what you are up to."

"And I know what you are up to, Polk."

"What am I up to?"

"You are going to try to cheat Mr. Bartlett out of his shares in the Richmond Importing Company, just as your father cheated my mother out of the most of what was coming to her after my father died."

"It's not so. I — I am trying to save Mr. Bartlett's money for him."

"You are the last person in the world to do any such thing, Polk. You know how to spend money, but there is nothing charitable in your make-up."

"You think you have got a case against my father, and now you are trying to make out a case against me."

"You are making out the case against yourself. Why don't you leave the Bartletts alone?"

"I haven't hurt them."

"Mr. Bartlett is very sick, and must not be disturbed."

"I came thousands of miles to see him."

"That makes no difference. You have got to leave him alone, so long as Mrs. Bartlett wishes it."

"Is that another of your orders?"

"It is. And, let me add, I am going to see that it is enforced. If you are caught around that house again without the lady's permission, I will have you placed under arrest, and stowed away in the Tien-Tsin prison. That prison is about the worst hole I have yet seen; and, if you know when you are well off, you'll do your best to keep out of it."

"You think you are big because you are a lieutenant," blustered Nuggy.

“I am big enough to handle you, Polk. Now you go about your business, and ” — Gilbert put a peculiar emphasis to the words — “don’t try to steal any more letters. They are easily duplicated, and such work may land you in prison.”

For the instant Nuggy Polk glared at the young lieutenant. Then he turned on his heel, and made down the roadway at a rapid walk. At a far corner Jerry Nickerson was waiting for him, and the pair soon passed out of sight.

CHAPTER XXV

“ON TO PEKIN”

“I AM very glad you came when you did,” exclaimed Mrs. Bartlett, when Gilbert reappeared at the house. “If you had not come, I do not know what I should have done.”

She spoke in a whisper, so that her husband might not be disturbed again. Jennie had gone to the sufferer, and administered a quieting draught; and he was now in a fitful doze.

“Had Polk been here long before I came?” asked the young lieutenant, in an equally low voice.

“At least half an hour. We tried by all means in our power to get rid of him; but he would not go, and at one time almost pushed his way into my husband’s bed-chamber.”

“I do not believe he will bother you again, at least not right away.” And Gilbert told how he had threatened Nuggy Polk. “I imagine he is a coward at heart.”

Mrs. Bartlett led the way to a side room; and, sitting down here, Gilbert listened to what she had to tell concerning the second fire at the warehouse.

“I believe some Russian soldiers started it, possibly the fellows you warned away. It is a great loss; but, fortunately, we have a little insurance, if it can be collected. The fire was a great set-back for Mr. Bartlett; and, although he was getting better after you left, he is now as bad as he was before.”

“Do you still wish to go to Taku?”

“I think not. The bombardment is over, and all is now as quiet as one would wish. I understand you have driven the Chinese out entirely.”

“We have driven all the soldiers and Boxers out, and the others are as meek as lambs. But the looting goes on, in spite of what has been done to stop it.”

“I presume you will now press on to Peking.”

“I don’t believe we’ll do anything for a week or so. We are awaiting the arrival of more troops, both from Manila and from the United States. And we need boats for the river and horses for the cavalry.”

“And what is the news from Peking?”

“All our people are shut up, and suffering a terrible bombardment. A mine was discovered under

the American legation, but it was cut off before the Chinese could explode it. They say most of the dwellings of the foreigners are wrecked. Many of the missionaries outside of Peking have been slain, and their bodies mutilated."

Mrs. Bartlett shuddered. "War is horrible, lieutenant. I want no more of it. And I want no more of the Chinese. If my husband gets better, I am going to persuade him to sell out his interest here, and go back to the States."

Soon after this Jennie came back; and then Gilbert was invited to tiffin on the back piazza, which had been repaired since the fall of the tree. As Mrs. Bartlett was a motherly lady and Jennie a lovely and engaging young miss, it can readily be imagined that Gilbert enjoyed the repast thoroughly. He lingered as long as he dared, and then hurried off to the office of the provost marshal of the district, to caution the guard against allowing the Bartletts to be disturbed by either Nuggy Polk or Jerry Nickerson.

When the young lieutenant arrived at headquarters, he found that some mail had just come in from the States and from the Philippines. There was

one letter for him from Manila, and written by Larry Russell, that interested him very much. This ran as follows:—

“*Dear Gilbert*,—I suppose by the time this reaches you, you will be in the hottest of the fighting, and will be covering yourself with glory. Well, go in and win, and don’t come out of the struggle with less than a colonel’s commission.

“All still remains somewhat quiet here, and we boys expect to move very soon; but whether to China or to the United States nobody can tell. The rebels are lying low in the mountains, and Ben says he may get another go at them; but I don’t think so.

“By the way, there is an old friend of mine in China, a missionary named Martin Wells, who sailed with me on the *Columbia*. You’ll remember my telling you about him. He was stationed at Hong Kong at first, but later on went to Peking; and I’ve read in a newspaper that he was trying to escape from the Boxers. If you can do anything for him, I wish you would. Have you seen or heard anything of the old *Columbia*? She must be somewhere around the Gulf of Pechili, unless the Chinese

pirates have captured her. I hear that those rascals are taking advantage of the war. I must hurry, as the mail is closing.

“Ever your friend,

“LARRY RUSSELL.”

“Dear Larry!” murmured Gilbert. “I don’t wonder Ben and Walter love him. Yes, I remember hearing about the Rev. Mr. Wells; and I’ll do all I can for him if we chance to meet.”

Gilbert had looked for a few days’ rest, but in this he was mistaken. It was true there was no fighting; but preparations were continued for the advance on Peking, and this gave him plenty of work to do.

General Chaffee was now in command of all the American forces in Tien-Tsin and on the way; and these numbered in round figures five thousand men. The British troops numbered about the same, and the French and German about half as many. Of Russians there were at least ten thousand, and twice that many Japanese. Of course, all of these could not participate in the forward movement; and the actual army which struck out for the Chinese capital numbered only sixteen thousand men.

Before the Allies left Tien-Tsin there were numerous heavy rains; and these caused the Pei-Ho to overflow its banks, and rush through the broken dikes the Chinese had left behind them. As a consequence, the marshlands were covered with water and mud for miles around, rendering the advance of the soldiers exceedingly slow and difficult. The rains continued; and, when it was not raining, the sun shone down so fiercely that many a man was prostrate by the heat. The water was so impure as to be unfit to drink, and the whole territory abounded in fever and malaria for the foreigners.

By the last day of July all was in readiness for the advance; and the first movement was made by the Russian contingent, which advanced up the river a distance of several miles, and, after a slight resistance, captured some additional mud forts. This movement up the muddy stream was followed by the starting of the transports, which had to be poled along, for fear of running into the junks the Chinese had sunk in the channel. A few of the craft were towed by Chinese coolies, but their progress was not satisfactory.

Following the advance of the Russians came that

of the French, and these two commands went up the Pei-Ho between the river and the railroad. The Americans, English, Japanese, and other commands advanced along the west bank of the Pei-Ho, the Americans being two thousand strong, including a battery.

The Chinese were strongly intrenched at Peitsang, in a position ten to twelve miles north of Tien-Tsin. They had over twenty thousand troops on the firing line, and half as many more in reserve; and several of their batteries held excellent positions for defence.

The main portion of Peitsang is on the left side of the Pei-Ho. It is a town of considerable importance, containing many thousands of inhabitants and a long wharfage. Back of the town is a long lake, connecting with the river by canals. These canals had all been cut, and the roads beside them ploughed up.

The going out of the Allies from Tien-Tsin proper was like the moving of some immense caravan, or what many a boy in America knows as a "Wild West" show. The troops were arrayed in a dozen different uniforms, and marched as pleased them; and behind them came the quartermasters' turnouts, horses and wagons, cows and carts, little donkeys

with loads which almost placed them out of sight, and huge, awkward camels with their burdens towering skyward. There were also Chinese coolies with packs, and with rickshaws — that is, carriages meant to be pulled by human hands. Everything that could “go” was pressed into service.

“It’s on to Peking now, sure!” exclaimed Captain Banner, as he trudged once more beside Gilbert. “And, in my opinion, we are going to have our hands full.”

“I am ready to take what comes,” answered Gilbert. “I was getting tired of hanging around Tientsin.”

“Sure, an’ this marchin’ is worse nor the bogs avould Ireland,” broke out Dan Casey, as he splashed through water up to his ankles. “Ivory shtep I take I think I’ll go into a hole up to me waist.”

“Dot’s all right, so long as you ton’t vos go in ofer your head, Tan,” replied Stummer. “How dis mud does stick to mine poots! Feels like it vos goin’ to bull ’em off, hey?”

“You ought to be used to such travelling by this time,” laughed Gilbert. “You have had lots of experience in the Philippines.”

On and on went the soldiers through the water and mud. Each was heavily loaded, and the suffering was great. Yet but few complaints were heard, for each nation was vying with the others to get ahead.

As soon as the first detachment of the Allies appeared, the Chinese batteries began to thunder forth their shot and shell with deadly effect. The guns were well managed, and to silence them seemed at first impossible.

“Major Morris, you will take your battalion around to the road on the left,” said the lieutenant-colonel, as he dashed up on horseback. “Yonder gun must be silenced. Do you think your boys can do the work?”

“We can try,” answered the major, as he saluted. Then he turned to the four companies behind him. “Boys, we are ordered to storm yonder position and take that gun. We must do it.”

“We will! We will!” was the reply. “Hurrah for Old Glory!”

“I know I can depend upon you. Forward, double quick! Left oblique!”

Away went Company A, with the others close

behind. As soon as the road mentioned was gained, the major brought the second half of the battalion up on the side of the first. Then came the order to advance in a skirmish line; and away went the three hundred and fifty odd regulars on the double-quick, firing at will as they advanced.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BATTLE OF PEITSANG

GILBERT felt his heart beat rapidly as he advanced at the head of the second division of Company A. It was no slight thing to rush to the firing line at any time, and he felt that the present movement was to be hotly resisted.

The gun before them was situated on an elevation of ten feet above the marsh, with a bank on the right and the left. In front of the gun was a deep ditch, all of fifteen feet wide. But at one end of the ditch was a small pile of dirt, which, in their haste, the Chinese had been unable to remove.

Boom! the gun belched forth just as the battalion was crossing the marsh, cutting down three of the soldiers and causing a momentary check in Company B.

"Forward!" shouted the major. "Don't hang back, boys. We'll soon have the hill!"

"Forward it is!" shouted an old regular. "Who's

afraid of the Chinks? I'm not!" And he went on ahead.

So far, Gilbert had not fired; but now he saw a good chance, and, aiming at one of the Celestial gunners, he discharged his pistol, and the gunner immediately tumbled out of sight. But there were a dozen to take his place; and soon the field-piece was loaded and fired again.

When the pile of mud in the ditch was reached, it was found almost too soft for the soldiers to step upon; and the foremost men hesitated, not knowing whether to go on or retreat.

"Down with your rolls!" shouted Gilbert, who was the nearest officer; and at once a score of blanket rolls went down in the mud. More followed; and these formed a temporary bridge, over which the soldiers leaped in safety.

The ditch crossed, there came a wild yell from the top of the embankment in front; and immediately a perfect horde of Chinese soldiers appeared, waving their fantastic banners and discharging their guns and pistols. But the Celestials were too excited to shoot very straight; and most of their ammunition, consequently, went to waste.

“Come on up the hill!” cried Gilbert, as he started to lead the way. He had seen a small opening, and was quick to take advantage of it. The way was slippery, and the situation a critical one; but he knew that a quick dash is worth a dozen common advances. In a minute he was at the top of the slope, and half a company came upon his heels.

Gilbert now found himself confronted by two Chinese soldiers, each of whom took aim at him as soon as he showed himself. Before the men could fire, one was knocked over by a bullet from the rear. The second, however, pulled trigger directly on Gilbert’s breast; and the bullet scraped the young lieutenant’s ribs so deeply that the blood flowed through his shirt.

“You are shot!” cried Captain Banner. “Better go to the rear.”

“Not yet!” was Gilbert’s answer. “Come on, boys! The gun will soon be ours!” And again he led the way.

But the Chinese did not intend to give up their field-piece thus easily; and soon a fierce hand-to-hand encounter was on, both sides first emptying their weapons and then using their gun-stocks for clubs.

Finding they could not save the gun, the Chinese loaded it to the very muzzle with a triple charge of powder and two shells, intending to blow it up.

“They are going to blow up the gun!” was the cry. And, seeing the movement, the majority of the Americans hurled themselves flat, to avoid the force of the explosion. But, before the gunners could touch off the piece, several sharpshooters picked them off; and the gun was saved.

The Americans on the embankment were confronting at least ten times their own number; and, as the tide of battle swept on, it looked as if they would be wiped out by such a horde. They had been fighting since five o'clock in the morning, and it was now half-past seven. More than two-thirds of their ammunition had been spent.

The gun was the centre of attraction, and soon the whole battalion was massed behind it. Some gunners tried to use the piece, but failed in their efforts to clean it out.

At this juncture a strong force of Japanese were seen to be approaching from the westward,—a force which had succeeded in turning the enemy's right wing. Seeing the Americans in front of the Chinese,

they came up in the rear; and thus the Celestials were caught between two fires.

For a few minutes it was as if pandemonium had broken loose; for both the Chinese and the Japanese yelled like madmen, in the mean while firing as rapidly as possible. Banner after banner of the upholders of the Dragon went under, and then the Chinese turned to break through the American ranks.

Major Morris had anticipated the shock; and, when it came, it found our regulars standing shoulder to shoulder, and two deep all along the line. A solid volley was poured into the enemy; and scores of Chinese went down, to rise no more. This terrific slaughter had its desired effect; and the Chinese turned again, and scattered through the Japanese, who cut them down on every side. But the Chinese could not be stopped; and, terror-stricken, they fled through Peitsang toward Yangtsun, still further up the river.

All told, the battle of Peitsang lasted from three o'clock, Sunday morning, the 5th of August, until well toward noon. The principal troops engaged were the Russian and Japanese, and the total loss to

the Allies was twelve hundred killed and wounded. How many the Chinese lost will probably never be known, but they certainly numbered into the thousands.

The capture of Peitsang was important, and many supposed that the Allies would rest there. But this was not to be; for that would have given the Chinese time to throw up intrenchments at Yangtsun, seven miles distant.

"We must go right after them!" said more than one soldier. And go after them they did, early on Monday; and by Tuesday Yangtsun had fallen, and the Chinese were retreating in the direction of Ho-Si-Wu and Matow.

The awful heat told fearfully upon Captain Banner's company; and most of the soldiers were glad enough to rest at Yangtsun for half a day, to await rations and some necessary equipments. The only troops who would not rest were the Japanese. Those little fighters were on the go night and day, and did not seem to know what exhaustion meant.

"They beat me," declared Captain Banner. "I have seen Indians keep it up pretty well, but never like these sons of Japan. I believe they'll go right

straight through to Peking without sleeping." And the captain was about right.

At Yangtsun, Gilbert was placed in charge of a detachment stationed not far from the river, where there were a number of large warehouses filled with rice and other produce. These warehouses were owned by Americans, and it was the young lieutenant's duty to see that they were not destroyed.

The night was a gloomy one, as if rain was coming. It was Gilbert's time off, yet he felt too stirred up to sleep. Besides this, the wound over his breast, while it did not hurt outright, itched considerably, adding to his wakefulness.

Unconscious of danger, he walked slowly down the street upon which the warehouses were located. He met a number of Chinese; but all were unarmed, and appeared to be friendly.

At the end of the block was a sort of hotel, which was now almost deserted. But there was one Chinaman standing at the front door; and, as Gilbert passed, this fellow eyed the young lieutenant narrowly.

"It is the same!" he exclaimed in Chinese. "The very same!" And he clenched his fists in rage.

"Did you speak?" asked a second Chinaman, standing within the front room of the hotel.

"I did, Tung," was the answer. "Do you see yonder American officer?" And the man at the doorway pointed with his long bony finger.

"And what of that soldier?"

"It was he who caused my brother Fun's house to be burnt down, and caused Fun and Ching Wo to be killed."

"Ah! You are sure of that?"

"I am positive." Chow Ching grated his yellow teeth. "Would that I could lay him low!"

"Would that we could lay all the foreign devils low!" answered the one called Tung.

"We will do that in time. But this man,—he helped to kill my brother!"

"Then you shall kill him."

"I will. And will you aid me?"

"I will, if we can do the deed under cover of the darkness. But we dare not shoot him. The alarm would bring a hundred soldiers around us with the speed of the wind."

"Let us follow him, and see where he goes. We may be able to get him into a corner."

"You have your dagger?"

"Yes."

"And I have mine; and they are better than firearms, for they raise no alarm."

"The American may have some money on his person."

"If so, we can divide it between us. Come, before he gets out of our sight."

A moment later the two Celestials left the hotel, and, like two shadows, slunk after Gilbert in the fast-gathering darkness.

CHAPTER XXVII

A RAINY MARCH TO TUNG-CHOW

ALL unconscious that he was being followed by two Chinamen who wished to take his life, Gilbert walked along slowly until the end of the street was reached. Then he turned down a side road, which led to an encampment of British cavalry. He had become acquainted with some of these men, and he was curious to see how they conducted themselves when off duty.

As mentioned before in this story, many streets in China become in time little better than ditches; and this was true of the road Gilbert was pursuing. It was not over fifteen feet in width; and at the bottom lay loose stones, weeds, and not a little garbage. All the houses along the road appeared to be dark and locked up.

Half the distance to the British encampment was gained, when the young lieutenant imagined that he heard footsteps behind him. He turned quickly, and

made out two forms approaching. As soon as discovered, the two forms sank out of sight behind a pile of stones.

"I don't like this," said Gilbert to himself, and instinctively felt for his pistol.

He was still three hundred yards from the British encampment, and not even an outpost was near him. The sky was now blacker than ever, and the road became so dark he could not see over a score of feet in any direction.

Suddenly a stone whizzed past his head, coming from where he had seen the two forms disappear. The first missile was followed by a second, which took him in the shoulder.

"Stop, or I'll fire!" he called out, and raised his weapon, but saw nothing to aim at. Then came two more stones, one of which hit him in the side of the head, half stunning him. He staggered forward, and then fell flat.

"We have brought him down!" whispered one of the Chinamen, the brother to the one that had been killed. "Come!" And he ran toward Gilbert, closely followed by his companion.

The Celestials were still a few feet away, when



IT WAS NOW A HAND TO HAND CONTEST.— Page 271.

Gilbert turned around, and managed to get to his knees. He felt that his assailants meant to take his life, if they could; and he was determined to resist to the last.

He had no time to take a good aim with his pistol, but fired as rapidly as he could; and the bullet pierced the ankle of one of the Celestials, causing him to drop down with a roar of pain. Then the other, Chow Ching, leaped upon him, dagger in hand.

To this day Gilbert cannot explain how he escaped the deadly blow which was aimed straight for his heart. But escape it he did, the keen blade merely burying itself in his clothing. Then the young lieutenant fired a second time, but this shot took no effect.

It was now a hand-to-hand contest; and, leaping up, Gilbert caught the Chinaman by the throat, at the same time trying to catch the man's wrist with his other hand. On his part the Celestial aimed blow after blow at the young lieutenant, one striking Gilbert in the hip. But this was of small consequence, and at last Gilbert had the wrist secured; and he gave it such a powerful twist that the dagger dropped to the ground.

“Help me!” cried Chow Ching to his companion.
“Help me, Tung, before it is too late!”

“I cannot. I am wounded,” groaned Tung.

The talk being in Chinese, Gilbert could not understand a word of it. But he realized that the second Celestial would take a part if he could; and, consequently, he began to drag Chow Ching up the road, away from the fallen Tung.

But Chow Ching, if not extra strong, was wiry; and presently he gave a twist, and freed himself. Then he leaped back to where the dagger had fallen, and secured the blade. Gilbert's pistol was not far away, but in the darkness the Celestial did not see it.

Footsteps were now heard approaching; and presently two tall English cavalymen hove into appearance, each with a drawn sabre.

“What's the row 'ere, Hi want to know,” demanded the one in advance.

“Help me!” answered Gilbert. “I have been attacked by two Chinese assassins.”

“Give yourselves hup!” roared the second cavalryman. “Hif you don't, Hi'll fire!”

But Chow Ching had no intention of giving himself up; and, dagger in hand, he made for the nearest

building. Instantly both cavalymen fired their pistols at him; but, if he was hit, he gave no sign. He disappeared behind the building; and, though Gilbert and the Englishmen hunted for him half an hour, he could not be found. It may be as well to add here that the young lieutenant never saw Chow Ching again.

While the hunt was going on, the soldiers had kept their eyes on Tung, who still lay groaning in the roadway. The search over, a guard was called, and the Celestial was made a prisoner. When examined, he said that Chow Ching had told him that Gilbert was the murderer of Chow Fun. He was sent to the rear, and later on placed in the prison at Tien-Tsin.

The adventure had given Gilbert all he wanted of roaming around in the dark alone; and, after that, he stuck close to camp, excepting when duty called him elsewhere.

"You must be careful," said Captain Banner again. "We've lost officers enough already. At this rate, there won't be a handful of us left by the time we reach Peking."

Although the night had looked like rain, the sun came up clear and strong on the following morning;

and by ten o'clock the heat was almost unbearable. The march was resumed, the Japanese and Russians having gone on ahead.

"Where to now?" asked Gilbert.

"To Ho-Si-Wu, and from there to Matow," answered Captain Banner.

"And how far is that from Pekin?"

"About twenty-eight miles. But I understand we have still the worst end of the road to travel."

"To move ahead in this heat is well-nigh impossible," went on Gilbert, as he stroked the perspiration from his brow with the side of his finger. "Poor Kelson is knocked out, and Ramsey says his head feels as if it had fireworks inside of it."

"Then Ramsey had better go to the rear, or he'll be knocked out, too. That will leave us with but seventy-nine men. I must say I feel rather queer myself," continued Captain Banner. "My stomach is very weak."

"You had better take it easy yourself, captain," was Gilbert's sober comment. "I must say you look as if you were fixing for a fever." And in this surmise Gilbert was correct; for Captain Banner was struck with tropical fever on the arrival of the troops

at Ho-Si-Wu, and had to be sent back to the hospital at Taku by boat.

This left Gilbert in command of Company A,—a position he was proud to assume, although regretting exceedingly that his fellow-officer was not to participate in the assault on the Chinese capital. The young lieutenant took command in his own quiet way, which at once won the respect of all under him.

“Sure, an’ ye deserve the position,” said Dan Casey. “None of the b’ys has fought harder nor you.”

“I think you have done your share of fighting, Dan,” replied Gilbert. “If you keep on, you’ll come out a sergeant at least, and perhaps a lieutenant.”

“Well, I wouldn’t mind being a sergeant, captain; but, as fer a lieutenancy in the rigulars, I’m afraid it’s beyant me. If it was the volunteers, it might be different. I’m not from West P’int, ye know.”

“And neither am I, Dan. And there is always room at the top,” concluded the acting captain of Company A.

Ho-Si-Wu having been occupied without serious opposition, the Allies marched straight for Matow, and from that unimportant town through Ching-Chia-

Wan to the walled city of Tung-Chow, popularly known as the gateway to Peking.

The opposition on the way was much less than anticipated. As before, the Japanese and Russians kept in advance, with the other troops on the right and the left. At various points the Chinese had thrown up strong intrenchments, and all their fortifications were ready for use; yet they generally fled after firing one or two rounds from rifles and cannon.

On the last two days of the march the long-threatened rain came down in torrents, covering the already muddy roads to the depth of six inches with water and slime. In this storm some of the transportation wagons lost their way; and for two nights Major Morris's battalion slept out in the field without covering of any kind. Of the transportation wagons which became lost, three took a side road running directly into the Chinese camp; and these would have been captured by the enemy, had not some sharpshooters of the Russians discovered them, and turned the drivers back.

It must be confessed that some of the soldiers were much disheartened, for the wearisome march was beginning to tell upon them. They could

scarcely drag one tired leg after the other, and had to be urged forward constantly by their officers. They were willing—nay, eager,—to fight; but to drag along mile after mile through rain and mud, with the thermometer standing at a hundred degrees in the shade, was something for which nobody had bargained.

And yet all felt that the advance upon Peking must be made as soon as possible. The foreigners congregated in the compound of the British legation were being subjected to a constant bombardment by the Boxers and Chinese troops; and, if the legation fell, it was certain that every man, woman, and child would be killed, and perhaps horribly tortured. Four hundred and fifteen people were pent up in the compound; and it was being defended by three hundred and four marines and eighty-five volunteers, all under the general command of Captain Poole, of the British army. Every entrance to the compound was strongly guarded; and barricades of sand and salt bags, boxes, casks, and dirt, were everywhere in evidence.

In the mean time the attack on the foreigners had lasted for many weeks, and the greater part of the foreign settlement in the Tartar City of Peking was in

ruins. This embraced the legations of the various nations, schools, hospitals, hotels, and some very costly residences. Looting went on by day and night, and the torch was applied on every hand. With the foreigners, provisions ran low; but all they could get from outside were a few melons. Yet, to a man, they resolved to die rather than to give up.

With the missionaries in the compound was the Rev. Mr. Wells, the gentleman mentioned in Larry Russell's letter, a devout man who had spent much of his life among the Chinese. In an early fight at the American legation the missionary had been struck by a bullet in the left arm, and he now carried that member in a sling. But he was just as enthusiastic as the rest about holding out, although praying night and day that relief might be no longer delayed.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE FIGHT BEFORE PEKIN

PEKIN, a very ancient city of China, is in extent about the size of Manhattan Island, upon which the city of New York is situated. It is located thirteen miles north-west of the Pei-Ho, with which it is connected by the Grand Canal and other watercourses.

The city as a whole is divided into two parts. On the north is the Tartar City, containing between fifteen and sixteen square miles of territory, surrounded by a wall fifty to sixty feet in height and twenty to fifty feet broad. In the centre of the Tartar City is the Imperial City, surrounded by another wall, where live the princes, nobles, and others of high degree; and inside of this is the Forbidden City, where the Emperor and Dowager Empress live and where are located the sacred temples. The Tartar City is full of fine buildings, including the public offices, National and Medical Colleges, Observatory, and Examination Hall, the latter con-

taining ten thousand *cells* to be occupied by those who come to Peking to be examined as to their qualifications for public office-holding. Many of the streets of the Tartar City are broad, but unpaved, and lined with one-story shops, huddled one against another and painted in almost all the colors of the rainbow.

To the south of the Tartar City, and joining it by three large gateways, is the Chinese City, about half as large as the other, and enclosed by a wall thirty feet high and fifteen to twenty feet broad. This is the heart of the real Chinese trade, and here are also located the theatres and the public execution grounds. The streets literally swarm with people, and are in activity day and night. Nothing is ever cleaned up; and to the babble of noise, which is nerve-wrecking, is added a smell which to a new-comer's nose is almost unbearable. Beyond the walls of Peking as a whole are many suburbs, of more or less importance, chiefly devoted to agriculture.

The American, British, and other legations in Peking are located closely together, on Legation Street, midway between the southern wall of the Forbidden and Imperial City and the northern wall of the Chinese

City. Each legation occupied from an acre to five acres of ground, and was surrounded by a wall with watch-gates. During the bombardment nearly all these walls were demolished, only those around the British legation remaining intact. Everything was ripped up by shot or shell, and rifle bullets peppered the buildings by the thousands. It is said that one door of the German legation contained sixty-three bullet-holes, and that another at the American legation was literally splintered into toothpicks.

Being short of ammunition, those in the British legation did their best to make every shot tell; and, as the bombardment went on, the streets outside were filled with Chinese dead to the number of hundreds. Silver candlesticks were melted up, and made into bullets, and an old cannon, which had not seen service for twenty years, was repaired by several army engineers, and made to do excellent work against the enemy.

Among those who believed in holding out to the last was Rev. Mr. Wells. "I am willing to live upon next to nothing," he declared. "And I will take a soldier's place, when called upon. We must hold them at bay until relieved." He had with him

on coming into the compound thirty-six pieces of silver; and these he promptly handed over, to be cast into bullets. This was paying back the Chinese in their own coin with a vengeance.

As the siege went on, it was curious to see how those of different nationalities became attached to each other. It was natural for the Americans and the English to stick together from the start, but not so for the Germans, French, Japanese, and others. But soon, when the peril grew greater, racial differences were forgotten; and each man stood shoulder to shoulder with his neighbor, ready to do or die, as the case might require. If any were more determined than the others, they were the Germans; for they could not forget nor forgive the foul murder of their consul, Baron von Ketteler, who had been shot down while making an official visit to the Tsung-li-Yamen.

As the Allies approached the capital, the bombardment of the British legation became more fierce than ever; and placards were posted throughout the Tartar City, proclaiming that all the foreigners must be exterminated within five days. A reward was offered for each foreign head taken; and it was only the timidity of the common Chinese soldiers which

kept them from rushing in by the thousands to obtain these rewards.

This state of affairs was guessed at by those marching so swiftly to the relief; yet nothing was definitely known, and it was feared that all those pent up in the British compound would be killed before their friends could get to them.

It was raining furiously when Tung-Chow, a suburb of Peking, was gained by the battalion to which Gilbert belonged. The road beside the canal was knee-deep in water and mud; and everybody was low in spirits, and almost ready to drop with exhaustion.

"It's the worst campaign I've ever seen," said one English officer to the acting captain of Company A. "We hadn't anything in South Africa to compare with it, or anything in Egypt, either," he added.

"We are at a disadvantage here," answered Gilbert. "Only a few of our transports have arrived, and we lack both men and supplies."

"Never mind. What there are of the Americans are doing nobly," answered the Englishman. "I saw you fight at Tien-Tsin, and it was grand. And, when it came to punishment, you took it like men."

The Japanese and Russians came first upon the Chinese intrenched just beyond Tung-Chow; and a sharp skirmish occurred, lasting the best part of two hours. But, as soon as the Japanese tried to turn the left flank of the enemy, the Celestials fled straight for the Chinese City of Peking, leaving the battle ground to the foreigners.

A conference of officers was now held; and it was decided that Peking should be attacked on the eastern side, first by the artillery, and then by the infantry. The Japanese and Russians were to attack north of the canal, and the Americans, English, and others south of that watercourse. The attack was to have begun on the 15th of August; but, by some misunderstanding, it started early on the day before, while the American and English troops were not yet in position. This caused the Americans a forced march of twelve miles from Tung-Chow in a heat which was fairly blistering.

The attack by the Japanese and Russian artillery was terrific, lasting from three o'clock in the morning until five in the afternoon. The eastern gate of the city, north of the Tung-Chow canal, was completely demolished; and then the Russians, led by General

Wasilewski, rushed through and up to the top of the great wall, where the flag of Russia was planted, speedily followed by the banner of Japan. But the fight was not yet over. It lasted far into the night, and the loss upon both sides was very heavy.

In the mean time the English troops attacked the south-east gate of the Chinese City; and, not being expected there, they met with but slight resistance. Some East Indian troops led the way, breaking down the gate with battering-rams. The troops were led by Brigadier-general Sir Alfred Gaselee; and, as soon as they were inside the city, they seized the Temple of Heaven and its extensive grounds, and then pushed forward through the torn-up streets toward the legations. At three in the afternoon they reached the canal opposite the water-gate, and signalled to those within the British compound. A reply was speedily forthcoming for them to enter through the water-gate, and this they did.

But during all this time our friends were not idle, and what they did will be told in the chapter to follow.

CHAPTER XXIX

HOW THE BESIEGED WERE RELIEVED

"WE are up for more fighting to-day, Pennington."

The words came from Major Morris, who had just reached Gilbert's side. Both were tired out, yet urging the soldiers under them to move along with all possible speed.

"It seems to me we are doing more walking than fighting," answered the acting captain of Company A, with a grim smile. "A pitched battle would be something of a relief."

"It's a pity the attack has already started," went on the major, earnestly. "Those Japs and Russians are bound to get ahead, it seems."

"What has become of the English troops, major? I've missed them for the last half-hour."

"They are somewhere on the road. They are bound to get ahead of us, too, if they can. I believe they got word to move before we did."

"And the French and the Germans?"

"Somewhere on the road, too, so I heard General Chaffee say. This appears to be a sort of go-as-you-please campaign. Yet it is wonderful to think that none of the Allies have had a falling out. Even the French and Germans get along well together, and they are usually pretty bitter."

"Where are we to attack?"

"Somewhere along the south-east wall, so I understand. If we can get through, we are to proceed straight for the legations. To my way of thinking, we are going to have our worst fighting after we get into Pekin," concluded the major.

The companies were swinging along doggedly, keeping a sharp lookout for the possible appearance of the enemy. Once a body of fifty Chinese did appear, but they speedily proved themselves Christians and friends. They had been sent back by the Germans for supplies.

"I don't see how they can fight their own countrymen," observed Gilbert to the officer who was acting as his first lieutenant. "It seems unnatural."

"Well, the Chinese are not all of one race, you know," was the answer. "Some of them are as different as our people are from the Canadians or

Mexicans. They speak different languages, and all their social customs are different. One old traveller was telling me that some Chinamen don't dare to travel in the districts inhabited by other Chinamen, and such a thing as emigrating from one province to another is almost unknown. You see, all that makes a big difference."

As the troops neared Peking, the booming of the artillery could be heard distinctly; and Major Morris's battalion was yet a mile away from the great wall of the Chinese City, when there came the whining of a shell overhead. The shell, however, burst far in their rear, doing no damage.

"Forward on the double-quick!" was the order issued; and, as tired as they were, the troops started to obey. In the command was a young bugler named Calvin Titus, an enthusiastic fellow who had served in the Vermont volunteers during the war with Spain. Regardless of all danger, he went on ahead, and, reaching the wall of the city, was the first to gain the top and lower a rope for the assistance of his comrades.

"The British are just ahead of us!" was the cry which presently reached Gilbert's ears; and then

came an order to Major Morris, directing that the battalion be taken to the left, where a company of Chinese sharpshooters, located in a watch tower on the wall, were trying to pick off the troops' officers.

"Forward, boys!" shouted the major, waving his sword. "Do your best for the honor of Old Glory!"

"Forward!" repeated Gilbert, leading his company in the rush. "Give it to 'em, and make every bullet tell! We can't afford to lose our ammunition."

His last words were drowned out by the cracking of rifles, followed by the roar of some artillery placed not far distant. Soon the air was filled with smoke and dust. As the command got closer to the wall, they heard plainly the yelling of the Chinese. Within the city the din was terrific.

"Here is a way up," came from Major Morris, who was close to Gilbert. He had espied a breach in the wall, made by some artillery hours before. The breach formed something of a series of steps; and up these went the men of Company A, with Gilbert still leading them. The sharpshooters in the tower saw them approaching, and turned a galling fire in the direction, laying several low.

“The watch tower!” yelled Gilbert, in order to make himself heard above the noise and confusion. “The watch tower, boys! We must root ’em out.”

“We will!” came in a wild cry. “Down with the Chinks! Come on! All together!”

And away went what was left of the company, up to the very top of the wall, and then around to the entrance of the watch tower. The sharpshooters saw them come, and felt that they must soon be surrounded and cut off from support. Down they dropped from floor to floor of the tower with the agility of acrobats, and started to run down the slope leading into the Chinese City.

“Company halt!” commanded Gilbert. “Take aim! Fire!” And a solid volley was poured into the fleeing Celestials, bringing fully one-half of them to earth. The others were speedily swallowed up in the street below.

From his commanding position on the top of the wall, Gilbert could now see a sight the like of which he had never before witnessed, and which, he felt, he should never see again. As far as eye could reach, the streets below, crooked, narrow, and filthy, were filled with Chinese soldiers and citizens, women and

children, rushing hither and thither, shouting, crying, and pushing each other out of the way. Many men and women carried their household effects on their backs; and they tramped heartlessly over those who had gone down, wounded or killed. The discharge of artillery had set fire to scores of buildings, and the swirling smoke and the crackling of the flames added to the horror of the spectacle. Over by the Temple of Heaven some British cavalry and Punjab infantry were scattering the crowds which had come there hoping to find a place of safety, the cavalry literally riding over the masses when they refused to move. Further on was another British detachment, making for the water-gate opposite to the legations in the Tartar City.

But now was no time to view even such a fascinating sight; and, leaving the wall, Gilbert ordered his company to rejoin the remainder of the battalion, which was following the British troops through the gate. Soon the grounds of the Temple of Heaven were gained; and the company stopped for a brief rest, the Chinese having in the mean while fled in all directions.

The English, followed by the Americans, were now

making for the central gate of the Tartar City, the gate nearest to the legations; for from the wall here the Celestials could command both the legations and the forces of the approaching Allies.

But this attack was anticipated by the Americans and the Russians in the British compound; and a daring rush by the American marines, followed by the soldiers of the Czar, speedily put the Chinese to flight, with the loss of many men. Some of the flying Chinese were confronted by Major Morris's command, and another skirmish resulted; but this was of short duration. As soon as the gate had fallen, two field-pieces were brought in, and taken to the British compound. Other field-pieces were taken to the grounds of the Temple of Heaven, which afterward became a camping-spot for the British and for some of the Americans.

Arriving at the Tartar wall opposite the legations, the American troops were told to follow the British through the canal gate, and were soon at the entrance to the compound. Here men, women, and children ran out to greet them, some fairly embracing the soldiers who had suffered so much in order to get to their relief.

"We have waited for you for fifty-six days," exclaimed the Rev. Mr. Wells. "God be thanked that you have come!"

"Americans, cheer your flag!" shouted Mr. Tewksbury, the missionary; and then came a loud hurrah, in which not only the Americans, but many others joined. Then came more cheering, for the English, French, Germans, and others; and, as night drew on, camp-fires were lit in honor of the occasion, and the missionaries and others gathered around and sang the Doxology, and praised God that the long and perilous siege was a thing of the past.

But the work for the troops was not yet over, and Gilbert was allowed to remain at the compound only a short time. Yet he managed to hunt up the Rev. Mr. Wells.

"Larry Russell wrote to me about you," he said. "I am glad that you are well."

"I am thankful to have you come to our aid," replied the missionary. "It is a glorious victory. What are you going to do next?"

"We are ordered to the gate of the Imperial City. We shan't stop until we have gained the Forbidden City, and brought the Chinese thoroughly to terms."

“I see. Well, that is right, I presume; yet war is an awful thing.” The missionary paused. “It was kind of Larry Russell to think of me. He is a fine lad.”

“He is all right, and so are all of the Russells,” replied Gilbert. Then he shook hands with Rev. Mr. Wells, and hurried off.

The artillery was already smashing the yellow roofs of the Imperial City when he again reached the firing line; and this continued until night closed down on the scene of carnage.

In the morning the attack was renewed with vigor, a battery of the Fifth United States Artillery sending shell after shell into the south gate of the Imperial City. A Gatling gun, also, did excellent work; and by noon the Americans, including the Fourteenth Regiment and the Ninth Mounted Infantry, had penetrated through four gates into the Forbidden City, and were at the doors of the Purple Palace. The fighting was very severe; and a number of Americans were killed, including Captain Reilly of Battery F. By this onslaught the Chinese were utterly demoralized, and fled in all directions, the guards of the inner palace throwing themselves upon the mercy of

their conquerors. Late in the afternoon a conference of generals was held, at which it was decided that the object of the mission had been accomplished, and the Chinese had been punished enough; and then the Americans returned to their camp outside of the Tartar City.

CHAPTER XXX

THE BURNING OF THE PRISON

FOR several days after the Americans had attacked the Forbidden City, Gilbert's command had little to do but to guard one of the palaces.

In the mean time the Japanese and the Russians were after the Emperor and Dowager Empress, who were said to have fled first to one city and then another. But the royal family had taken time by the forelock, and could not be overtaken.

Looting had already begun in Peking, and but little could be done to stop it while the fighting still continued. The scenes which had been enacted at Tien-Tsin were here repeated on a larger scale; and acres of buildings were first emptied of everything valuable, and then given over to the flames.

As nearly the whole of China was now anxious for peace, it was thought at first to leave the Forbidden City alone. But this the Celestials would

have taken as a sign of weakness upon the part of the Allies; and it was later on decided to open the great palace, and allow a detachment from each foreign nation to march through it, as a sign that the foreigners were absolute masters of the situation. This was done, after which the palace was locked up, and the grounds closely guarded against all vandalism.

It was less than two weeks after the fall of Pekin when Gilbert received a letter which filled him with interest. It was from Mrs. Bartlett, and ran as follows:—

“*Dear Lieutenant,*—You will be surprised to hear from me, but I feel that I must let you know what has happened since your absence.

“A few days after you left Tien-Tsin, the guard at our house was disturbed by a midnight intruder, who was at my husband’s desk, ransacking his private papers. The guard called upon the man to surrender, and with bad grace the intruder did so; and he proved to be—would you believe it possible?—Nuglich Polk!

“Mr. Polk was at my husband’s papers, trying to

steal the stock certificates of the Richmond Importing Company. He begged to be let go, but I would not listen to it; and he is now in the jail here, awaiting trial.

“When Mr. Polk was searched, we found upon his person a number of papers, also some letters from his father, which prove conclusively that father and son were trying to defraud my husband out of what is rightfully coming to him from the company. Among the letters there was also one from Taku, written by a Jerry Nickerson, and speaking of your case against the Polks. I think this communication makes it clear that the Polks are becoming afraid of you; and that must mean that Ramsey Polk defrauded your father, just as you supposed was the case.

“When Nuglich Polk was captured, he claimed to be suffering from a fever. Whether this is so or not, I cannot say; but it is certainly a fact that life in prison is doing him no good.

“When you get the time, I shall be pleased to have you call upon us; and I will then show you the letters I have mentioned, and which Major Gilson has kindly allowed me to retain. It may be to your

interest to call upon Nuglich Polk. You will find him in Ward 8 of the prison.

“My husband is doing very well, and hopes to be around again in the course of a few weeks. We are glad to learn that Pekin has fallen, and hope that a permanent peace will soon follow.”

“They have cornered him at last!” murmured Gilbert, after reading the communication carefully. “I wish I could get to Tien-Tsin and see that letter.”

His wish to get to Tien-Tsin was gratified the very next day. A detachment of troops was going down the river, and Gilbert was placed in charge. Although the country was still filled with Chinese, the trip was made without special incident; and the acting captain of Company A found himself in Tien-Tsin at nightfall the next day, and not many blocks distant from the prison Mrs. Bartlett had mentioned.

Looting had long ago stopped in the city, and all was comparatively quiet. Yet, as Gilbert walked in the direction of the prison (being half of a mind to visit Nuggy Polk before calling upon the Bartletts, who lived a good mile away), he noticed several soldiers and citizens running in excitement.

“What’s the matter?” he asked of one of the soldiers, a slim little Frenchman.

“Zare ees a fire down zat way,” answered the Frenchman, pointing with his hand. “Ze guard say it ees ze prison zat is burning.”

“The prison!” exclaimed Gilbert.

“So ze guard say. I run, and I see for my own eyes.” And the little Frenchman ran off as fast as his legs would carry him.

“Well, I guess I’ll see for ‘my own eyes,’ too,” muttered Gilbert, and also put on a burst of speed, which speedily took him past the man who had given him the information. By the time the second square was passed, the young lieutenant saw the prison building quite plainly, and saw that it was blazing fiercely at one end and in the front.

A strong wind was blowing; and, unless this shifted, it was easy to see that the entire structure would be doomed. The thick black smoke was curling from every window; and the very street was so full that the fire brigade could do little or nothing.

“Have they got the prisoners out?” asked Gilbert of one of the firemen.

"Got some of 'em out," was the answer. "We couldn't get at the others: the smoke was too thick."

"Where are the prisoners?"

"Under guard, in the compound in the rear."

Without the loss of a moment, Gilbert ran around to the compound. At least sixty prisoners were there, some of the wounded lying upon the ground and improvised couches. He looked them all over, but saw nothing of Nuggy Polk.

"I am looking for a man who was in Ward 8," he said to one of the prison guards. "His name was Nuglich Polk, and he was an American."

"We couldn't get anybody out of Ward 8," was the answer, after a glance at Gilbert's uniform. "That ward is up there, and the smoke kept us out."

The young lieutenant made out the corner of the building to which the guard alluded. An outside stairway led to that section of the structure, a stairway which but a moment before had been surrounded by smoke. But now came a puff of wind, and the smoke was sent flying in the opposite direction.

"Give me a key—I am going to look for that

man!" cried Gilbert. "It's a shame to let anybody die like a rat in a trap."

"That's so, lieutenant. But the danger —"

"I'll risk it. Give me the key."

"I'll go with you," returned the guard. "I see the wind is shifting."

"Then come!" And away went Gilbert for the stairs. Some few who saw the action cheered, but others shook their heads.

"It's foolhardy," said the head-keeper. "If the wind drives back, he'll be lost, sure. Grimes, better stay here."

"I said I'll go, and I will," answered Grimes, the assistant. He had been in charge of Ward 8, and felt he must do what he could for the unfortunates who were locked up.

It took Gilbert but a few seconds to reach the second floor of the prison. The door at the top of the outside staircase was open, and he plunged into the corridor beyond. Here the smoke was still thick, and he had to pause to locate his surroundings.

"To the left!" shouted Grimes. "The prisoners are in the last two rooms. Better bend down — the smoke won't affect you so much."

To find his way through the narrow corridor was no easy matter, and Gilbert was soon suffering for the want of pure air. He, however, gained the first of the two rooms mentioned in safety; and on his heels came Grimes.

“Help! help! Let us out!” came in the voices of two men, a Russian and a German; and the door was quickly unlocked. The men leaped out like wild beasts, hurling Grimes flat in their eagerness to escape.

“Now the other door!” said Gilbert, in a hoarse whisper, so thick was the smoke in his throat; but Grimes was too dazed to answer, and, rising, the keeper ran after the pair who had just been liberated.

Gilbert was going after him, when his foot touched something and sent it spinning against a side wall. It was a prison key, the one Grimes had dropped. Hurriedly he picked it up, and ran for the last room at the end of the corridor.

Here were three men fighting madly to pull down the iron barrier with their bare hands, while a fourth was at the window bars. “Let us out!” cried one, in broken English. “Do not let us roast to death!”

“I will open the door,” answered Gilbert. “Stand

back!" And he thrust the key into the lock. It did not fit very well, and all the time he was trying to turn it the men continued to shriek and dance around like maniacs. At last the bolt slipped back; and out came the men pell-mell, the fellow from the window following the three others.

"Is Nuggy Polk here?" cried Gilbert; but none of the men answered him, and an instant later he found himself alone in the corridor, which was again filling with smoke as the wind shifted once more.

Gilbert was on the point of abandoning the search, when it came to his mind to take one look into the ward before leaving it. Quickly he sprang past the door, and his eyes swept over the couches and the corners of the apartment. Nobody was there; and then his eyes travelled to a small side window, opening upon what was a small balcony. But this balcony was now barred from use.

A cry of horror escaped the young lieutenant. At the window was Nuggy Polk. The young man had tried to escape by crowding between two of the bars. His neck had been caught in the opening; and, with his head on one side and his body on the other, he was a close prisoner.

CHAPTER XXXI

GILBERT RETURNS GOOD FOR EVIL

“NUGGY POLK!” gasped Gilbert; and for an instant he could say no more.

“Sa—save me!” panted the prisoner. “Don’t let me bu—burn up!”

“I will do what I can for you,” answered the young lieutenant.

He leaped to the window, and took hold of the bars. They were an inch thick, and resisted every effort he made to bend them. He examined the sockets, to find each solidly imbedded in the stones of the window frame.

“Break them—somehow!” pleaded Nuggy Polk. “O Pennington, please don’t leave me!”

“I’ll do what I can for you, Polk.”

Again Gilbert glanced around the apartment. The smoke was so thick he could see but little, and it made the tears flow down his cheeks in a stream. At the opposite end of the prison the flames crackled fiercely, and they were swiftly coming closer. What-

ever was to be done must be done quickly, or it would be too late.

His eyes rested on the iron end of a cot; and as quickly as possible he smashed the bed apart, and caught up one of the side pieces. Using this as a lever, he pried upon one of the bars of the window, and after great effort succeeded in bending it several inches.

“Now try to pull in your head, Polk,” he said, and helped the young man. Even yet it was a tight squeeze, but the deed was accomplished with no further harm to the young man than a badly scratched ear.

But just as Nuggy was freed there came a strong rush of wind and a cloud of smoke which enveloped both like a sheet. The fire was coming up the corridor, and had already reached the stairway by which Gilbert had ascended to the ward.

“Wha — what shall we do next?” groaned Nuggy. “We are lost! Oh, Heaven help us!” And, too weak to stand longer, he sank on his knees, and then went into a heap on the floor.

“Come, this won’t do!” cried Gilbert, and caught the young man by the arm. “We must get out—

we simply must!" But Nuggy did not hear him, for he had fainted.

Leaving the young man on the floor, Gilbert ran toward the corridor. A glance told him that escape at the further end was cut off completely. He looked at the ward opposite, a door of which stood wide open. Beyond was a window opening upon a narrow court-yard, a spot the fire had not yet touched.

Gilbert ran to the window, to find a number of the bars gone. In the court-yard he saw several firemen.

"Get a ladder!" he called out. "A ladder, quick! There are two of us up here!"

His words were not understood by the natives, but they were understood by a German in the crowd; and he quickly translated them, and a rush was made for a bamboo ladder.

In the mean time Gilbert had crawled back to where he had left Nuggy. He could scarcely breathe, and was afraid that each moment might prove his last.

"Come!" he said to the young man, who had opened his eyes in a dazed way. "Be quick! It is our only chance."

"We are doomed," moaned Nuggy. "Oh, why

did I ever come to China! This comes of doing wrong. Heaven forgive me!" And again he sank back, too weak and terror-stricken to do anything for himself.

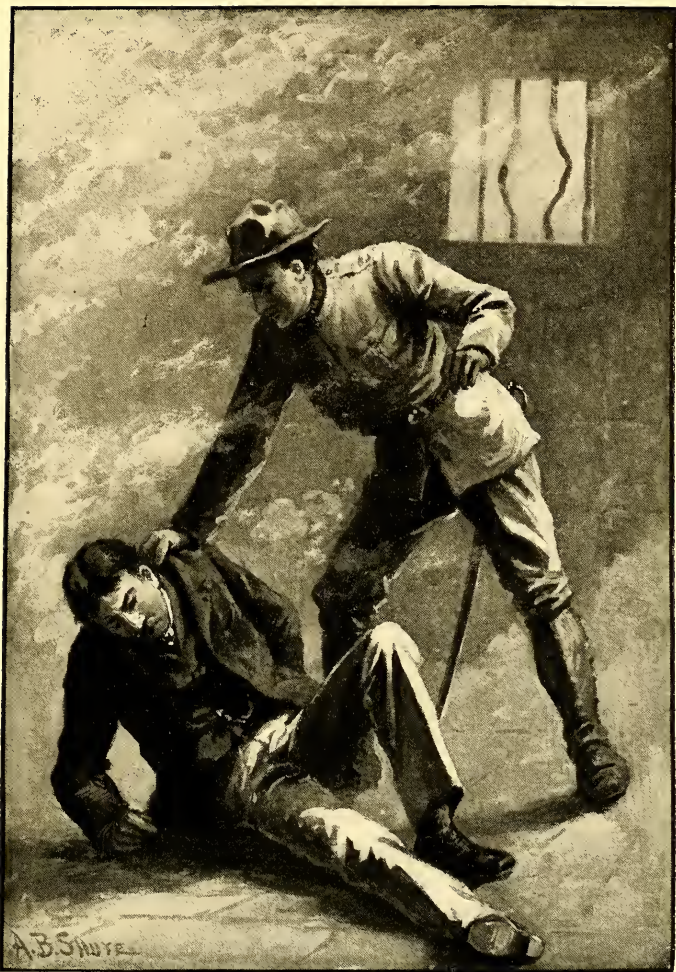
The position was so full of peril Gilbert hardly knew what to do. The flames were close at hand, and in a minute more escape would be impossible. For one brief instant he thought to leave Nuggy Polk to his fate. Then he grated his teeth.

"I'll save him, anyway," he thought grimly; and, unable to lift the limp form, he caught Nuggy by the collar, and literally dragged him over the floor and into the corridor. Here a hot blast came up, and made him stagger. The sparks, flying in all directions, burnt his neck and hands. But still he did not let go; and the next moment he was at the window of the opposite ward with Nuggy in his arms.

A ladder was coming, but it was not yet there; and the few seconds to follow were trying in the extreme. The smoke poured toward the window, and the flames came licking in at the door.

"Hurry up!" gasped Gilbert. "Hurry! The flames are right behind us."

Then the ladder came, and a dozen men hoisted it



"I'LL SAVE HIM ANYWAY," HE THOUGHT. — Page 308.

up to the window. How he got outside with Nuggy in his arms, Gilbert could never tell afterward. He tried to descend, but his head swam around like a top; and all he could do was to hold on where he was.

"We're coming. Don't move!" said a voice below him; and in a second his burden was taken from him. Then, as he felt his senses going, he slipped down the ladder, struck among a crowd of people, and for the moment knew no more.

When Gilbert recovered, he found himself sitting on a bench in the rear of the prison yard, and several American soldiers in attendance upon him.

"Lieutenant, you had a close call," said one of the soldiers. "Another minute, and it would have been all over with you."

"Yes, I know it," answered Gilbert, as he drew a deep breath. "I — I feel rather queer yet."

"I should think so! Better take it easy for a while."

"I'll have to, sergeant. What of that man I brought out?"

"He's in a bad way, lieutenant. Reckon he was sick, wasn't he?"

“So I believe. But he’ll pull through, won’t he?”

“Yes, he’ll pull through,” put in another voice, and a surgeon strode up. “Can I do anything for you, lieutenant?”

“I don’t know that you can. I think after I have had a wash-up I’ll feel better.”

The surgeon wished, however, to do all he could, and gave Gilbert a dose of medicine to counteract the effect of the smoke which the young lieutenant had inhaled. Inside of half an hour Gilbert felt quite like himself once more, though somewhat shaky in the lower limbs.

Nuggy Polk had been taken to a neighboring building, which had been transformed into a temporary hospital for such of the prisoners as were sick. When Gilbert got there, he found the young man in a doze; and he was advised not to disturb him.

“He has been sick, and this affair has made him worse,” said the prison doctor, in broken English. “Better let him rest.” And Gilbert agreed.

An hour later found the acting captain of Company A at the home of the Bartletts, where a warm welcome awaited him. He found Amos Bartlett in

an easy-chair, propped up by hair pillows. The old tea-merchant was glad to see him.

"I am much better, thank you," he said in answer to Gilbert's query. "I seem to have come out of a bad dream."

"I am glad to see it," returned the young lieutenant. "You must take it easy for a while, though, both in body and in mind."

"My mind is easy, thanks to what the insurance companies have promised to do and what my wife has found out about the Richmond Importing Company. I presume she has told you of what Nuglich Polk tried to do."

"I will tell him later on, Amos," put in the wife. "But now you must rest." And she beckoned Gilbert from the room.

A long talk between Mrs. Bartlett, Jennie, and Gilbert followed; and the young lieutenant was shown the papers taken from Nuggy Polk, which he perused with keen interest. Then he told of the affair at the prison, but modestly refused to relate how much of a hero he had been.

"Somehow, I think Nuggy Polk will be a better fellow after this," he concluded. "He has been

brought face to face with death, and that often makes a difference in a man."

"I hope he does turn over a new leaf," answered Mrs. Bartlett.

The young lieutenant was invited to remain at the Bartletts' home over night, but could not do so, as it was his duty to return to the troops he had accompanied from Peking. He had no time off again for two days, when he got a leave of absence for three hours, and went over to the new prison to see how Nuggy Polk was faring.

A change had indeed come over the young man,—a change so startling that Gilbert was almost dumfounded. Nuggy's face was pinched and white, and there was a look in his eyes which gave him the appearance of being haunted. He stared wildly at the young lieutenant.

"So it was you who saved me?" he said in a strangely unnatural voice. "I can't believe it!"

"And why not, Polk?" asked Gilbert, as he sat down beside the bed.

"Why not? Why should you save me — after all I did against you?"

"I wasn't thinking of that. I was thinking of

saving a fellow-being who couldn't save himself. Not to have done as I did would have been inhuman."

"You risked your life for mine!"

"Perhaps I did. But let us pass that over, and talk of something else. How do you feel now?"

"I am sick—I was sick before the fire. This climate has knocked out my stomach."

Gilbert was on the point of asking if liquor had not had as much to do with it as the climate, but wisely refrained. "You want to take care of yourself in the future," he remarked. "Be very careful of what you eat and drink."

"I shall be careful. I'm not going to drink any more,—at least, not as I've been in the habit of drinking. But, Pennington, I want to talk to you. As I said before, I can't understand why you risked your life for mine."

"Then don't try to understand it. It is past now."

"You are a better fellow than I am,—a good deal better," persisted Nuggy. "I don't believe I would have tried to save you under the same circumstances."

"Then it is a good thing that I am myself and

“you are yourself,” said Gilbert, not knowing how else to reply.

“You are a true Christian, Pennington,—a real, practical Christian.”

“Thank you. I have tried to be so—even though I am a soldier.”

“Ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have let me burn up,” continued Nuggy, with a deep shudder. “I know just how tight I was at that window. I couldn’t budge, and I was suffering the tortures of the infernal region. I was sure my end had come, when you released me.”

“There was certainly no time to spare.”

“Pennington, after this I am going to be a different man—I swear it. This thing has opened my eyes. It doesn’t pay to—to—well, to cheat others, as I’ve been trying to do. I was going to try to get the best of you and the Bartletts, but I shan’t try any more. It’s a bad business.”

“I agree with you on that point, Polk. The man who tries to do wrong is bound to come to grief sooner or later.”

“Have you seen the Bartletts?”

“Yes.”

“Then you know why I am here.”

“I do.”

“I am glad of it, for it will make it easier for me to speak of what is in my mind. I suppose you have read the letters that were taken from me.”

“I have.”

“We were going to get old Bartlett to sell out for a song—if we could. I was to prove to him that the Importing Company was about to go bankrupt.”

“I have suspected that for some time.”

“The Importing Company is in first-class condition and making money,” went on Nuggy, quickly, as if afraid to keep back the information for fear of not being able to free his mind later.

“You told me that at Manila.”

“And the Bartlett stock is worth two hundred cents on the dollar.”

“And what of the Pennington stock?” put in Gilbert, quickly.

“The Pennington stock is worth just as much—and there is at least sixteen thousand dollars’ worth of it,” was the answer, which made the young lieutenant’s heart bound. “There, the cat is out of the bag—and I am glad of it. That secret has lain like

a lump of lead on my soul ever since you saved my life."

"Sixteen thousand dollars' worth of stock?"

"Yes, and worth thirty-two thousand dollars in the money market. Pennington, you shall have what is due you, even if I have to force my father into giving it to you."

"That is the stock my father placed in his hands just before his death?"

"Yes."

"How did you learn of this? Did your father tell you?"

Nuggy Polk hung his head for a moment. "No, he didn't tell me. I was at his private safe at home one day, and I found the missing certificates. I had had a row with father over some money matters; and, when he came home, I threatened to expose him if he didn't give me what I wanted. Ever since that time we have worked hand in glove together, and he has allowed me all the spending money I wanted. But that is past now. I am going to lead a straight life, and I am going to try to get father to do the same."

CHAPTER XXXII

BACK TO TAKU — CONCLUSION

Now that he had confessed so much, Nuggy Polk seemed anxious to relate all the particulars; and it was a good hour before Gilbert could get away from the sick man. By that time Nuggy was very weak, and the doctor forbade him to talk longer.

Gilbert returned to the encampment with a heart that was as light as a feather. He now knew exactly how matters stood with the Richmond Importing Company; and he felt certain that sooner or later he should come into every dollar which had belonged to his father's estate.

Nuggy had agreed to put everything into writing; and this document was drawn up two days later, in the presence of Gilbert, Mrs. Bartlett, and one of the prison doctors. At this time Nuggy was feeling fairly well, and the doctor said that it was likely he would be as well as ever in the course of a month or six weeks. The charge made against him by the Bartletts was dropped.

While calling upon Nuggy, Gilbert asked him about Jerry Nickerson, and was told that Nickerson had gone back to Taku, to take the first ship he could get for home. "He is sick of affairs here," said Nuggy; "and as soon as I got to feeling bad he deserted me. I never want to see him again."

Shortly after Gilbert and the Bartletts had obtained Nuggy Polk's confession, the young lieutenant was ordered to Taku, to take charge of some goods which were arriving by transport. He journeyed by rail from Tien-Tsin to Tongku, and was glad to note that the country was now free from Boxers and Chinese troops, and that the natives were going to work again, almost as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

"This campaign is about over," he reasoned. "The Chinese have been taught a lesson; and they'll be only too glad to negotiate, through Li Hung Chang, for peace." And this surmise was correct.

Arriving at Taku, almost the first man Gilbert met was Captain Ponsberry of the *Columbia*. The captain was as hale and hearty as ever, but rather doubtful concerning the disposition of the cargo he had on board of his vessel.

“We had a mighty reesky time a-gittin’ here,” said the captain. “Run up agin’ two Chinese junks full o’ pirates; but we showed ’em a clean pair o’ heels.”

Gilbert told him of the condition of affairs at Tien-Tsin, and of how he could find Amos Bartlett and Nuggy Polk. The next day the captain journeyed to Tien-Tsin, and spent two days with the Bartletts, paying a visit to Nuggy Polk each day. What was said and done never reached Gilbert’s ears in detail; but later on he found out that the whole matter had been turned over to Amos Bartlett for adjustment, and that Nuggy had written a long letter to his father concerning the state of affairs. This letter came as a thunderbolt to Ramsey Polk; and reaching him as it did, immediately after an interview with the lawyer Gilbert had appointed to take up his case, he found himself so hedged in that he was compelled to bow to the inevitable.

“There has been a great mistake made,” he wrote back. “I am willing to do what is right, and both Mr. Bartlett and Lieutenant Pennington shall have all that is coming to them. I hope you will not make the whole affair public. If necessary, I will

resign from the company." And this he did; and other men, who were strictly honest, came to the head of the concern.

"We owe you a great deal, Lieutenant Pennington," said Amos Bartlett one day, when Gilbert was calling at the home in Tien-Tsin. "You are a smart young man."

"And a good soldier, too," put in Mrs. Bartlett.

"Yes, and the best of it is that he is one of our American soldiers," put in Jennie. "I believe all our American soldiers are brave."

At this Gilbert felt compelled to smile. "If they are not, they ought to be," he answered. "It's an honor to fight for Uncle Sam."

"It's a pity Mr. Polk didn't become a soldier," observed Mrs. Bartlett.

"He has already told me that he is going to join the army just as soon as he is well enough," answered Gilbert.

"I am glad to hear it," came from Amos Bartlett. "It will probably be the making of him."

Here let us draw to a close this tale of adventures in China. We have been with Gilbert during an ex-

citing time in Manila, along on an interesting journey to Nagasaki and Taku; and we have followed the young lieutenant's stirring adventures while the Boxers and Chinese troops were being driven first from Tien-Tsin, then from Peitsang, Ho-Si-Wu, and Tung-Chow, and lastly from Peking and the Imperial City itself. He had had no easy time of it; and now, when Peking was in the hands of the Allies, and the diplomats of the various nations were trying to arrange for permanent peace, he was perfectly willing to rest, and to attend to the personal affairs which had cropped up so unexpectedly. Many adventures were still in store for him, which will be related in another volume, entitled: "Under the Mikado's Flag; or, Young Soldiers of Fortune." In this tale we shall also meet many other old friends, including the Russell brothers and those faithful comrades in arms, Carl Stummer and Dan Casey.

Gilbert did not forget that Captain Banner was on a sick-bed; and he went to see his superior officer often, and also the other men of Company A who had dropped out of the ranks for one reason or another. He was glad to find the captain improving,

although it was doubtful if the officer would assume his position for a long time to come.

"But never mind," said the captain to Gilbert one day. "I know my company is in good hands. The boys tell me you led them splendidly."

"I only did my duty," answered the young lieutenant. "I came here to fight, not to sit still and think about it. But I am glad we have captured Peking."

"Yes, so am I. It will be a lesson that China will never forget. After this, foreign flags will have a new meaning to the Celestials; and our ministers and missionaries will come and go without molestation."

At the end of the week Gilbert was ordered back to Peking. The great capital was now comparatively quiet, and the shops were beginning to open once more for business.

"I don't believe we'll have to remain in China much longer," said Major Morris to Gilbert. "The war is over."

"Let us hope so," answered Gilbert. "But, even if it isn't, I don't believe we'll have any more lively times than we had when the cry was: ON TO PEKIN!"

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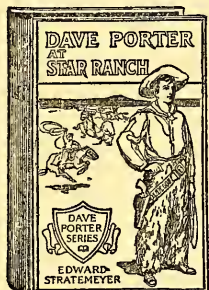
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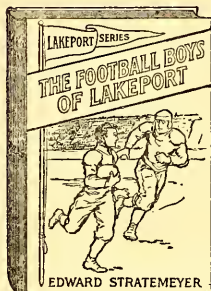
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